

The Wire

JAZZ,
IMPROVISED MUSIC
AND

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ISSUE 1 SUMMER 1982

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CAPITAL JAZZ

Capital Radio's annual jazz bash is upon us again. Last-year festival punter Kevin Kennedy takes a look at Lon-

don's biggest open-air jazz festival and prays for sunny skies...

After two bad years – fire in 1980; street insurrection in 1981 – the Capital Jazz Festival (to its enormous credit) is saying 'third time lucky'.

Of all your British jazz festivals, Capital's (now at Knebworth Park) has drawn some flak in the past from committed jazz-festival goers. The policy, say the purists, seems to be 'play safe' with enough funky-fusion acts presumably to attract the MOR market. But these are hard times for promoters.

The question is – do you pay out £7.50 per day to be in the thick of it, or stay home to await subsequent recorded highlights on the radio (like there were last year)?

On the British side, action-replays by last year's Pizza Express All Stars, NYJO and Zoot Money seems a pity when there are quite a lot of big-league British artists who have yet to grace a stage at Capital Jazz. No Stan Tracey this year? Not to mention musicians like Weller-Spring, Harry Becket, Spirit Level, Chris Hunter etc and quite a few others who didn't make it to on Bracknell this year.

However... jazz fans of various, if differing, persuasions should certainly find acceptable

the Bobby Lamb-Ray Premru Band, the Ronnie Scott Quintet and Ian Carr's Nucleus. But dissatisfaction from certain jazz purists has been voiced over the emphasis on the British pop fringe again this year – Shakatak, Morrissey-Mullen and the Breakfast Band. Some are even unkind enough to say that it's hard to find much connection between jazz and Shakatak's or Morrissey-Mullen's recent recorded output.

On the American list, reggae singer Jimmy Cliff seems an odd choice, sticking out a bit like a sore thumb between B.B. King and Benny Golson-Art Farmer.

There aren't many women on the list, as I look down the ads. Singer Carmen McCrae seems to be flying the female flag virtually on her todd. A pity, really, because it's not as if there aren't any women jazz musicians – what about British tenor-player Gail Thompson or vocalist Norma Winstone, or America's Joanne Brackeen, or even multi-instrumentalist Patrice Rushen who, in spite of sojourns into the Top Ten, knows the jazz keyboard (in the Bill Evans' vein) backwards? And as for Carla Bley...

This is, of course, the largest jazz festival you get within the

London catchment area, so who is worth seeing this year?

On Saturday (17th July), B.B. King will please the blues fans. I just hope that, unlike last year, my girlfriend and I aren't sandwiched behind the enthusiastic punter who, through-out the Muddy Waters' set, felt moved to shout the lyrics half a second before Muddy did (just to impress us that he knew them?). To be sure, not unlike listening to out-of-phase stereo.

Also on the 17th, there's a welcome visit from the Benny Golson-Art Farmer Jazztet, and that reliable old Kansas City strider Jay McShann, while the phenomenal guitar-technique of Tal Farlow promises to be a great attraction.

On Sunday (18th), the Crusaders and Spyro Gyra share the billing with the vibrant, young Chico Freeman. It's unlikely that Freeman fans will much enjoy the bland Crusaders, and Spyro Gyra's last album was a little disappointing. But that opportunity to see the talented Freeman, as well as the unexpected view of American organist Dick Hyman, and the predictable but crowd-pleasing Dizzy Gillespie could justify your day-ticket.

Saturday (24th) brings something of a coup with a rare visit from the 'High Priest of Soul' – Ray Charles, topping up the end of the market left by a Chuck Berry or a Bo Diddley who have something of a pop-crossover ap-

peal. Generally, a good day – with Gerry Mulligan's Big Band, Clark Terry (another crowd-pleasing trumpeter, hopefully with alto-player Chris Woods, as in London earlier this year?), and Freddie Hubbard-Ron Carter. The crowning glory has to be the appearance of the Modern Jazz Quartet which, if nothing else, possibly explains the absence of the Heath Brothers.

Sunday (25th), the interest is bound to centre on the latest young Turk, Wynton Marsalis – and, admittedly, you'd be daffy to miss him. Lionel Hampton's Big Band seemed a shadow of its former self last year with the absence (through illness) of its leader – cross fingers this time. Quite a different vibist – Mike Mainieri of Steps – could provide some sparks with the backing of Mike Brecker, Eddie Gomez, Pete Erskine and Don Grönlund. Art Blakey's bands have come up trumps for years, while Dave Brubeck – with son Chris on bass and Jerry Bergonzi on sax? – could add interest. Guitar students will need to flock to the front to be within finger-range of Kessel, Ellis and Byrd – and who will blame them?

Hopefully, this year, MCs will be primed beforehand on pronunciations – the announcement last year of 'I.R.A. Sullivan' (yes, I've seen him often in Dublin's Brady's) had the crowd rolling about. Still, he shouldn't have any trouble with 'Jimmy Cliff' – but you never know...

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STEVE LACY

A PERSONAL VIEW

My first encounter with Steve Lacy's music was via the album *Sonrie*, long since out of print, back in the early days of my jazz education. Its collective nature confused me so the album went back on the shelf for 10 years.

In 1977, Lacy performed in London as part of Derek Bailey's first *Company Week*; his grasp and assimilation of the differing musical approaches, encapsulated by the members of *Company*, impressed me. Two years later, at a festival in Portugal, Lacy held 1000 people spellbound for an hour with a solo set which ran like a potted history of jazz. His opening notes seemed a logical extension of the previous occasion. He had played like opening a book at a random page, making sense of the text; I was sold.

Since then, with each successive Lacy record and performance, I have witnessed a continuing evolving process in his music, built on his profound sense of jazz's history, based on practical playing situations; playing Dixieland with Roswell Rudd, studying Thelonious Monk's music and reworking his compositions, believing in Cecil Taylor's worth in the Fifties when the world rejected him, and arriving at a state totally himself.

More important, and the essence of his creativity, was relentless pursuit of the possibilities of one instrument – the soprano saxophone – when his contemporaries looked to multi-faceted voicings for expression.

More recently, Lacy's adventures in the freer parts of the music has rounded out his assimilation of jazz's vocabulary. Starting with Taylor in the Fifties, Lacy has worked his sense of tradition through various encounters with free music. He formed a quartet in 1966 with bass player Johnny Dyani and percussionist Louis Moholo and toured the globe in the mid-Sixties ending the journey, after a chequered existence, in South America.

Steve Lacy has performed with many of Europe's leading free musicians, culminating in several appearances with *Company*, a musical situation he readily admits as being the most taxing and demanding.

With Thelonious Monk's death still fresh in the mind, it's worth underlining Lacy's total understanding of his music. Never prepared to treat Monk's compositions lightly, his soloing – while being totally Lacy – has bowed with respect in Sphere's direction. At a recent *Company* concert, pianist Mishia

Mengelberg joined Lacy for a lighthearted working of three Monk themes, both musicians bringing their own brand of humour into play in a way in which Monk would have totally approved.

Since settling in Paris, Steve Lacy's own groups in the last 10 years have been built around saxophonist Steve Potts and Irene Aebi doubling on cello and violin. More recently, it has been her voice which has come increasingly to the fore with musical adaptations of poems by Brion Gysin.

It is Lacy's interest in literature and Tao philosophy (as Brian Case explains here) which has shaped much of his musical thinking; the composition titles, the themes themselves, the words, all bound together in a single-minded vision of a unique composer and performer.

Andrew Turner
Steve Lacy will be making his first appearance with his own group in Britain in November when his current sextet takes part in an Arts Council Contemporary Music Network tour.

FEATURE
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MUSIC DISPATCH

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The man who liberated the soprano sax talks about the spark, the gap – and the leap. Brian Case watches the road.

'Music has a mind of its own, and at the time you have to just watch the road. Something like that . . .

'The spark . . . the gap . . . the leap. Robert Musil talks about that for three big books. (*The Man Without Qualities*). Zen literature, too. What we're talking about is magic. That's what's interesting in any kind of art – or athletics, or cooks.

'When I used to work with Monk, he used to say, "Let's lift the bandstand". That's magic, man, when the bandstand levitates. I didn't know how to do it – but I knew what he was talking about. Old dreams but they're still valid.'

Any artist sharing Steve Lacy's above-stated belief in the near-priestly function of art is in for a thin time in our society. Touring England with Company, Steve has been occasionally depressed by sparse audiences.

'In the kind of music we do together, the whole thing is – is it interesting? Is it alive? There's nothing else to say. All the other criteria fall by the wayside.

'England is rough because of the quantity of rock'n' roll going on, the proportions. It's hard to cope with all that. I used to love Hendrix, Stevie Wonder, the Beatles, Otis Redding, but the ordinary bulk just makes me sick. I can't stomach it at all.

'Last night, I was walking by the university here, and I heard some ordinary rock they had coming out of a party there – just some typical stuff – and loud, you could hear it for three blocks!

'Me, personally, I got sick to my stomach. I couldn't stand it. It's just like everything I do is against what this is. And that was current normal stuff with loads of people having a good time to it, no problem – except I was walking down the street and I was suffering, and I was the only one who was.

'It's hard to deal with a phenomenon like that. You have to consider that you're a specialist, you're a freak – and you have to live with it.

'The only thing important in music, as in anything else, is life and death. Any kind of style, any kind of way is valid, if it's alive. Life and interest are two things I

STEVE

equate. Once a thing is sufficiently interesting, it becomes alive. I don't care whether it's Dixieland, Flixieland, Pixieland, or a private or public joke or no joke at all – if it's alive, I'm for it.

'In my own case, I don't want to be put to sleep, so I don't want to put others to sleep.'

You can sometimes judge a man by the company he keeps. In the case of Steve Lacy, it is possible to infer a high seriousness and heft from his title dedications. A man of vast cultural grasp, tributes to writers like Elias Canetti, Kafka and Dostoyevsky and painters like Paul Klee appear alongside the more expected jazz masters in his personal pantheon.

What they all have in common goes a long way towards explaining why the pioneer of the modern soprano saxophone, whose original inspiration was the Bechet of 'The Mooche', should have deserted steady gigs with the likes of Pee Wee Russell, George Wettling, Miff Mole, Henry Red Allen, Max Kaminski and Lips Page for the financial void of the



Jon Kilby

undiscovered Cecil Taylor.

Canetti's *Auto Da Fe*, a novel of nightmarish intensity which foresaw the rise of Nazi Germany, started our trace.

'He was beyond even what he knew himself,' said Steve. 'The power of observation, the burning inspiration, the prophecy. I've read everything I can get my hands on in English, which is not much. My wife reads Gogol, so she was able to tell me about the journals and other stuff.'

'To me, writing has to get to a certain level, a certain heat, before it interests me really. The greatest writers and the greatest players are the ones who write or play beyond themselves – above and beyond the rational. For example, Gombrovitch said that after he'd read something he'd written, he became that – but before writing it, he didn't know what that was.'

And Klee?

'I studied his lecture notes and works like *The Thinking Eye* and I think I learned as much from him as I did from many musicians. He's all about rhythm and

ensuring variety, wetness, a kinda fertility. I can do it in addition to what I normally do, but I can't only do that. The thing is to change up – play on a theme, off a theme. I like a variety of approaches in conjunction with each other.'

Few musicians have Steve Lacy's iron determination. He worked with Thelonious Monk for four months, and spent the next 12 years working out the possibilities of Monk's compositions. He and Roswell Rudd, an ex-Dixielander trombonist, concentrated exclusively on the Monk repertoire from 1962-65, and Lacy has recently returned to it again.

'It became like a kind of Dixieland; yeah. Part of learning that stuff is to fool with it, and to arbitrarily change certain aspects of it so as to see what will happen. It's a way of orientation, and I do that with my own material too. I try and play it in different tempos and see why it won't work.'

'I don't worry about the Monk stuff like I used to. I try and get the theme right, but once that's over, I don't have to take it too seriously. I used to try to get each measure correct, but now it's sort

'To me, he was the vanguard of the vanguard – the freest edge of the free thing they had going then. We got to be fast friends and sort of brothers, and we spent a lot of time playing together in my house in New York.'

He'd say, 'Well – let's play', and I'd say 'OK – what do you want to play?' – and he'd say, 'No, let's just play'. This was revolutionary to me at the time because I was into Monk tunes, and thought you had to have a tune, a structure and chord changes, the whole thing. He didn't have any problem that way. He'd just play, and when he played it was really alive.

'This started me thinking a lot, and it took me over five years before I reached that point myself, and a lot of hard work and struggle to break the shackles. His way of going into the beyond and just taking off – to not worry about where you were coming from, but just to go – I wanted to be able to do that myself. It had something to do with my concepts of life and death and music.'

The late Fifies found Lacy playing in the Gil Evans Orchestra, sharing a short-lived quartet with Jimmy Giuffrè, inspiring Coltrane to take up the soprano, playing with Rollins on the Williamsburg Bridge.

the batteries. Born to Russian emigrant parents, he feels his nationality strongly.

'It's in the blood. Very strong. I feel it in my appetites, in the way I seek out certain kinds of music, certain kinds of books, in the way that I respond. In my music there's a certain lyric thrust. I think the Russians have a power in their language and a rhythmic vitality. Negative aspects: there's a sloppiness, too. I've got to watch it! There's some sticky stuff, too – a treacly quality.'

Sloppy is the last thing one associates with Lacy. The steadiness of his musical advance and the single-mindedness of his compositional output indicates a methodical mind.

Example: why do you use an off-station radio on 'Stations'?

Answer. 'It had several aspects to it. One was a desire to get into the now, to keep the music absolutely now, and have nothing to do with then. When you turn the radio on, it's really now. Whatever you catch, you have to deal with. Next, the element of inspiration from John Cage. Thirdly, it was dedicated to Monk, and the structure, harmony and rhythm that I superimposed upon the radio is very Monkish. So that's what that was all about.'

That species of QED makes it

LACY

proportion and structure, thickness and thinness of lines, the effect of one thing on another, visually.

I've translated this into my own musical terms. Klee is trying to seize something and fix it and put it down. His work covers a vast area of human dealings and endeavours, and he's found ways of dealing with all these phenomena in plastic terms. That's what a musician does too, so it's very close.'

Continual practice and periods of totally free playing armour him for his role as a vehicle for the music.

'It's good to have something in the bank, as it were, before you make that leap. It's good to be steeped in the technical aspects, because otherwise you're going to break your neck. Free playing is a kinda research for me, a kinda pushing. You extend the language and you come up with a few things, but I find it hard.

'The danger is dryness, the drying up, a tendency towards aridity. For me, these are a way of

of behind me, and I can relax with it more. I think I do a better job now.'

Two major influences in the emancipation of Steve Lacy were Cecil Taylor and Don Cherry. The period with Taylor from 1958-59 was seminal but both men have since developed apart.

'That influence isn't apparent now in what I'm doing – if it was, there'd be something wrong – but it is chemically related. Some of the stuff that he was writing back in the Fifties that we used to rehearse has disappeared, and he never went back to it. On the contrary, for me, it formed an integral part of what I did, and was the basis of some of my own writing.'

'Those pieces on a record like *Into The Hot*, they gave me a key. That was kind of a gift to me. I really got into that kind of composition, whereas he got out of it, and went beyond that. Even the titles, "Bulbs", "Mixed", they're kinda like my titles, too.'

Cherry's arrival in New York with Ornette in 1959 bowled him over.

'One day, Rollins said, "I have a good place to play – why don't you come out to practise?" I didn't know where he was going to take me. It was out on the bridge, you know – and that was it.'

'During that period, we practised two or three times a week. It was very fruitful for me, and he said he learned something from it, too, because he needed stimulation from other people at that time.'

'It was then that I realized that it was hard to get a sound outside, but if you persist at it, you can – and then when you go indoors, it's easy. I still find that valuable. When I first started as a kid, I played in a tiled bathroom and it sounded great – then when I got in a normal dead room, it sounded terrible. This is the opposite.'

In 1965 he left America for Europe, and has been settled in Paris since 1970. He prefers the depth of experience in the Old World, though occasionally returns to New York to recharge

difficult to relate to Lacy's leap beyond logic.

'It's a progressive appetite for wanting to take the leap, because unless you do, you're not really alive. If you're not secure enough to take the plunge, then you're really in trouble, and you'd better go back and practice until you are secure enough to drop the security. It isn't random at all.'

But the concept of the leap conjures up associations of a bracing of the muscles, of strain. Don't most musicians report that, during the creative act, their minds are a blank?

'Not exactly a blank – more like a blink. You try and stay out of the way. You try and not lose touch with the music, and let the thing happen. It's not you that does it – it's IT that wants to be done. You get yourself in good shape and be in tune and on your toes, have good chops – and not mess it up. It can only go one way, and it's not you who decides, it's IT.'

Discography – Page 35

Brian Case does a few hard bop press-ups with wily tenorman **HAROLD LAND** and talks about geographical accidents of birth.

MOST UNFORTUNATE, LIKE A FOX

In jazz, underrated is an overstocked category. Chance, fashion and geography sometimes combine to keep a fine musician on the secret list, and they all worked overtime in the case of tenorman Harold De Vance Land.

His most creative period – his period of steadiest employment – lasted from the mid-Fifties until around 1960, coinciding with the dominance of the more declamatory tenors of Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane. Land's tone – subtle and less obviously striking – wasn't allowed much of a hearing, and, besides, he lived on the wrong coast.

Much is made of the Texas tenors, but since Land left Houston (home of Arnett Cobb) at six and didn't start playing tenor until his last year in high school at San Diego, California, he is unlikely to have absorbed much of the T-bone tone through the gills. Like most tenormen of his generation, Coleman Hawkins' 'Body & Soul' performance first turned him around; more significantly in terms of his own qualities, he singles out Lucky Thompson as an influence for his 'fluidity and beautiful big round sound'. Lester Young, Ben Webster and Don Byas also figure on his list, and Bird, of course.

Pretty much self-taught, Land's early gigs at the Creole Palace exposed him to guest artists like Sonny Criss and Teddy Edwards, master of bebop, while a period on the road with Jimmy and Joe 'Honeydripper' Liggins gave him a taste of r&b. In 1954, he tried his luck in L.A.

Ironically enough, he got his biggest break right at the start of his career when Max Roach and Clifford Brown took him on. 'It was my friendship with Eric Dolphy that was instrumental in my joining the group,' said Land. 'I used to go over to his home to play sessions with him and one day Clifford Brown came by and played with us. He then told Max about me and Max came by one time and sat in. They both liked the way I played so I joined the group.'

The first engagement was at Tiffany's Club in L.A. in the summer of 1954, and Land remained with the group until 1956 when the death of his grandmother and homesickness for his wife Lydia and small son Chris caused

him to quit. 'Both Clifford and Max were the driving forces behind the group. Max has such a musical approach to drums. Richie Powell also contributed a lot to the repertoire, and Clifford was easily the best trumpet-player I ever worked with. I just can't imagine how fantastically he would have been playing today if he'd lived. When he played, he would astound you nightly, and I was privileged to be able to hear him every night, to be a part of it. I know the records the band made impressed people, but on record you can hear only 25 per cent of what you could have heard in a club. Every night we played was so exciting it was almost unbelievable.'

Rollins took his place, and Land returned to L.A. Commercially a backwater for black musicians, it was none the less a vital centre of music-making, ranging from Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy to the highly individual talents ranging around Land. The collection of minor cult figures in the tenorman's circle gives an indication of the degree of originality within the tradition: pianists Elmo Hope, Carl Perkins and Hampton Hawes, drummer Frank Butler ('as of today, this very minute,' Jo Jones told *Down Beat*, 'Frank Butler is the greatest drummer in the world') and trumpet players Jack Sheldon and Dupree Bolton.

Land joined the Curtis Counce group which cut three terrific albums for Contemporary, one for Dootie, and lasted from September 1956 until Carl Perkins' death in March 1958. 'We had a rough time together because it was hard to get work. We made some albums, but nobody really got behind the band to get it exposure,' Land said. 'We were making progress in Los Angeles, even if nobody was aware of it,' he told Leonard Feather. 'There wasn't much money, but we were having a lot of beautiful musical moments.'

Some of the most beautiful moments, as far as Land's playing is concerned, feature on the ballads: 'Time After Time' from *Landslide*, 'I Can't Get Started' from *Carl's Blues*, 'Angel Eyes' from *Exploring The Future* and 'How Deep Is The Ocean' from *Cancellation*. His tone, like Hank Mobley's, is round as a pebble, warm and intimate and slightly fogged,



and his delivery is as sinuous as Lucky Thompson's or Don Byas's. One of Land's many attractive aspects on the ballad is the sheer conversational reasonableness of his romanticism, his freedom from camp huffing, a manner you can live with.

As for the up-tempo, the press-ups of hard bop which are in generous supply throughout the Curtis Counce collection, Land gets the pots on without recourse to the Charles Adams method. Heat burns like a peat fire, and his sheer variety of attack – placement of accent, smear, legato wail, abrupt precise galvanic flurry – turns a lot of celebrated cooks into JATP.

The intelligent tenor graced a lot of West Coast sessions, from Vic Feldman's splendidly titled *Mallets A Fore Thought* to the brilliant Hampton Hawes' *For Real* on which they collaborated on a couple of compositions, and Scott La Faro and Frank Butler made a dream rhythm section. Bad times economically – Nat Hentoff recalls Land's advice to young musicians as 'be a plumber' – but rich in Now's The Time (dumb comfort, Harold!). He made two albums under his own name after the Counce outfit disbanded, *Harold In The Land Of Jazz* and *The Fox* which is a stone classic.

Jazz is a collective effort, and one of the fairnesses is that stone classics can occur without anybody on the strength racking up a genius rating. Comparable in many particulars with Mobley's *Soul Station* – one integrated hard bop unit concentrating on originals, clever and relaxed-but-treacherous because of a common determination to crystallize rather than revolutionize – *The Fox* presents five prime reasons for inclusion in anyone's pantheon: Land, Hope, Butler and Bolton – currently reportedly clipped in the bud by a life stretch – and the compositions. You can buy that album blind – you're gonna be killed by somebody.

What do you do after you've laid something obviously incomparable, and nobody cares? You probably ask who you hafta fuck to get out of here, and then go on going on. Land cut the superb *Take Aim* which was released 21 years later, and settled for small victories with Gerald Wilson and Tony Bennett. His work with Bobby Hutcherson and Blue Mitchell is coming from a craftsmanlike, calculated – and often wonderful – musicianship. Monk looked no further than Harold Land when he recorded at the Blackhawk for Riverside: 'nuff said. Terry Southern once wrote a salutatory preamble to a novel. If a little guy squares up to a big guy, and the little guy's in the right and keeps a-comin', the big guy's gonna put him away every time. Land's and Mobley's and Criss's half-decade was decompressed by the big winds of Newk & Trane. You should check them out, however.

Would be have got the breaks if he'd moved East?

'At this period I did think about it. But I like space and exercise, and I like to play tennis. Also I felt California was a better place to raise a son. It might have hurt me career-wise, but it was the choice I made and I'm not sorry.'



DAVE HOLLAND

Unannounced by the British music press, and therefore unknown to most people in this country, British bassist Dave Holland came close to death several months ago.

Dave, based in the States since playing with Miles Davis in the late-Sixties, underwent heart surgery after a tooth abscess lead to poison entering the bloodstream. As a result, he has been out of playing action for several months.

Dave Holland's rise to fame started in storybook tradition when he was spotted by Miles Davis playing at Ronnie Scott's in 1968. Immediately signed to the Davis band, Dave became an integral part of a great change in Miles' music of which the album *Bitches Brew* was the climax, being a major influence on the rise of jazz-rock.

After leaving Miles Davis,

Dave became part of another significant but, alas, short-lived group – Circle, which included Anthony Braxton, Chick Corea and drummer Barry Altschul with whom he later formed half of the Anthony Braxton Quartet and two-thirds of the Sam Rivers Trio.

His most recent appearances in Britain were with Derek Bailey's Company (summer 1980) and with Sam Rivers (early 1981). We wish Dave a speedy recovery and hope he'll be making a contribution to the music scene again soon.

JULIUS HEMPHILL

A further jazz casualty recently brought to our attention was saxophonist Julius Hemphill who was here last year with the World Saxophone Quartet. Julius had to have part of a leg amputated following an accident. We wish him a speedy recovery and an early return to playing.



John Kibby



RAN BLAKE

While being a gifted and highly individual pianist/composer, **RAN BLAKE**

also finds time to tour as a soloist, as well as chair the Third Stream Music Depart-

ment at the New England Conservatory. In this rare interview, Barry McRae takes

a look at the influences and achievements of this talented musician.

The remarkable Ran Blake was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1935 and later moved to Suffield, Connecticut. At the tender age of five, an elderly friend of the family introduced him to the composers of the past. This tuition made little impression, and in his early teens he switched his seat of learning from the family adviser's chair to the streets of his hometown.

A newly found interest in jazz led him to take lessons from Ray Cassarino (a former member of the Woody Herman Second Herd) but, more important, he met a man called Hubert Powell. Through him, he discovered the singing of the Pentecostal Church. Powell and his family opened Blake's eyes to a whole new attitude to music and showed how they 'sang the music of God, with the most beautiful blues scales'. In so doing, they made Blake a convert to their musical ecstasy.

On leaving school, Blake kept up his interest in music and played in a few local nightclubs. He also waited tables in the 'Village' and it was there that he discovered his second great inspiration, Thelonious Monk.

'That guy was insane and I loved him', Blake said, and his love of the man's music was to colour the whole approach to his own jazz. In some ways, his devotion to Monk can be seen as a practical realization of limitations in his own instrumental technique. During the course of discussions on another subject, Blake said of Bud Powell, 'That's where I want to go in such a way as to suggest that he thought Powell's bravura displays beyond him. Perhaps because of this, he felt that very little in the bebop tradition could be of use to him

and joked that, from within the style, his three favourite pianists were Monk, Monk and Monk.

The Fifties saw something of a dichotomy in his musical life. On the one hand, Gunther Schuller persuaded him to pursue the role of musician, and indirectly introduced him to the work of Bartok, Ives and Webern. On the other, his fellow-feeling for the gospel music led him to Mahalia Jackson and to her accompanist Mildred Falls. In the early Sixties, he actually took lessons from this remarkable pianist, as if determined to add something of the baptist rock to his piano style.

The results are best heard on 'Church on Russell Street' (1), a track on his first recording. It is listed as 'Wooster Street' on the sleeve but certainly complies with Falls' instruction to 'absorb this and then be yourself', as Blake stomps out some straight storefront piano. The remaining tracks are very different. They are in duo with the talented Jeanne Lee and show just how sympathetic Blake can be in support of a singer. Her breathy, warm-hearted vocals and his chilling chords are an irresistible formula, and they move effortlessly through show tunes, straight blues and traditional items.

Their partnership comes as no surprise because Blake is a lover of lyrics. He claims that 'the singers speak to me, it's a verbal thing, a story, a programmatic thing, and it's one of the greatest things in my life'. Because of this, he actually regards Ben Webster as a singer, at least in spirit, and this does raise a question regarding his own style and his devotion to Monk. The late pianist was one of the most architectural of all jazzmen; he never played more than the bare bones and made no

effort to flesh out a ballad with flowing rhetoric. Listen to Blake play similar material like 'You Stepped Out Of A Dream' (2), 'Sophisticated Lady' (2), 'Get A Kick Out Of You' (4) or 'Lush Life' (7). The details may be different but the economy is very much the same, and nothing superfluous is said in recounting the musical story.

How then does this equate with his love of the singers? The answer is in the manner in which he provides the accompaniment for Lee, the way in which he provides the superstructure on which her unpredictable vocals can be laid out. If ever a pianist demonstrated an affinity for the vocal art, it is Blake, and the whole performance becomes 'as one'.

Unfortunately, this excellent album did not open any recording floodgates. An album, *Ran Blake Plays Solo Piano*, was made for ESP in 1965 and *Blue Potato And Other Outrages* appeared on Milestone in 1967. Apart from these, the jazz world had to wait until 1975 before any appreciable number of records appeared to document Blake's musical progress. During this time, Blake's academic career blossomed and he advanced to his current position with the New England Conservatory.

The 1975 record was appropriately called *Breakthru* (2) and was made in Oslo. All but three of the 17 titles were by other composers and Blake approached the wide range this offered in a variety of ways. Inevitably, there are constants and the same can be said of all collections that used other people's material. Blake's dragging, tension-building approach to timing permeates every title, and his use of 'wrong' har-

monies is consistently right. His command of keyboard technique is free from false aspirations, but it is exciting, often chromatic, but always used to further the musical content of his work.

It is instructive to compare different versions of standards. Lengths vary as inspiration dictates and his approach to Ellington tunes is especially imaginative. Blake rates Edward the Pianist highly, and says 'maybe by 1955 his great orchestral things had happened, but it was then that he grew as a pianist'. Two editions of 'Lush Life' are there to provide a fine example. The Paris recording (7) is slightly shorter than the one made only days earlier in Rome (5). The first version moves some distance from the sumptuous velvet of the Duchs treatment, while the second seems more careful to maintain the spirit of the title. Blake woos 'Sophisticated Lady' (2) with similar gentility, but 'Drop Me Off At Harlem' (2) becomes a piece of avant-garde stride.

Even with Ellington's tunes there is no diminution of Monk-like irreverence. Not that this is particularly surprising, when we consider how near latter-day Duke can come to Monk in his more flamboyant moments. The real point is that, while Blake ignores the routes that would be taken by most pianists, he never crosses the frontier into the bizarre. There is scant evidence that he ever displayed bad taste, although his early Sixties recording of 'Summertime' (1) did show a certain lack of maturity. Not that it was a bad performance, but he seemed thrown by the inherent histrionics of the theme and retaliated with drama, ill-suited to his normal musical attitudes.

Using his own material removed such a snare. Blake is an impressive composer and he played his own tunes very much with thematic considerations in mind. This might have led him to be slightly less ambitious than he would have been with 'foreign' subject matter, but his works gain by being treated in an apposite manner. 'Field Cry' (3) is desolate and bluesy, 'Silver Fox' (3) has a wiry lyricism, and 'Jim Crow' (3) mutters about discrimination in an acrid and angry manner.

Perhaps the most evocative, however, were his musical portraits. Strangely, not enough time is devoted to each figure on record, but they are all performances that tell us exactly what Blake thought of them as people. They suggest that cinema critic 'John Surman' (6) is unsure of his direction, that former 'Jazz Hot' writer 'Barbara Belgrave' (6) is aware of life's more romantic aspects, and that 'Susan Sontag' (6) is happiest delving into the ethereal. 'Leroy Jones' is suitably hip, and although 'Death Of Edith Piaf' (6) could have been over-staged, Blake's beautiful piece avoids pretentiousness and brings a sombre dignity to the subject.

His feelings about his fellow pianists are predictable. 'Monk' is obviously a thing apart, but 'James P. Johnson' is his favourite stride man and he has a special place in his heart for 'Mary Lou Williams' - 'her ballads were good, but the blues...'. He feels that 'Count Basie' continued to grow in stature and that the 'Red Bank Kid' was right in regarding economy as the absolute virtue. In contrast, he found 'Art Tatum' 'awfully busy' and said that such over-statement did not communicate with him.

He admits that 'post-Coltrane people want a longer thing' and he thinks this goes a long way to explaining the musical attitudes of a man like Cecil Taylor. In Taylor's early work, Blake saw

'great pitch possibilities, now he's more Pan-African and, although he may not have the bebop swing, there is a great rhythm'. What worries Blake is 'that there is no silence and the audience leave not hungry for more'.

This led him to an observation about his own style. He says that certain people have expressed a desire for 'a more definite pulse, a rhythm' in his playing. Listening to 'How 'Bout That II' (3), one can see that he did occasionally limit propulsive movement. Yet such playing cannot be dismissed as static, he merely creates a sound-field in which statement is more important than mobility. This may well be why he is something of a loner. Isolation allows him the luxury of bringing his ideas to fruition at just the creative rate he finds appropriate to the material in hand, and to the mood of the moment.

With some surprise we noted his unique compatibility with a singer. How, then, does the loner fare in the company of other instrumentalists? He claims to be 'not a people person', yet increasingly he has recorded with other musicians. He has done duets with Anthony Braxton, Ted Curson and Daryl Lowery, and has recorded with medium size groups. 'The Pawnbroker' (8) is by a nonet, tidily arranged by Lowery, and with an organization and a sense of swing that would make it difficult to date. 'Touch Of Evil' (8) is looser, the 11-piece 'head' is directed by the pianist and its sop to tradition is made as the leader steals his own 'Blue Potato' as a brass interlude.

Blake certainly seems to thrive on organization, although there are at least a couple of examples of a quite abstract approach. The rambling 'Crystal Trip' (4) is a case in point, and it encourages him to put creative expressiveness before formal rationality. There is a similarly free feeling to 'Blue Gardenia' (8), in which the piano marks out hurdles at odd dis-

tances, and over which Lowery floats with nonchalant ease and Pres-like indeterminacy. On 'Sonata For Two Pianos' (as yet unissued), he goes the whole hog with an open-ended solo. He admits that this is not a natural form of expression for him, although he was pleased with the playbacks. He added that he thought, 'It worked because I don't do it often - I wouldn't want to do it every day, I think themes are important'.

Not an unreasonable postulate from an academic, a man who discusses Lemon Jefferson and Robert Johnson in terms of Charles Dickens and James Joyce. This academic, however, tours as a jazzman in his college holidays, and plays uncompromisingly improvised music in a style totally drawn from the Afro-American experience.

Nevertheless, teaching is still Blake's primary motivation, and he talks about it with genuine passion. 'The great, great commitment in my life is the Third Stream Department, which is one of only two in America. The main thing is not that it is Third Stream and that it makes use of various materials, but that everything is taught by ear. Students come in with a tape recorder, they bring their own tradition, we give melodies, chords... Mingus told me some things, about how he taught his men, Tristano did, I add the Ran Blake things. We start with Mother Earth, whose name is Billie Holiday.'

That sounds like something of a stack-up in favour of jazz hut, knowing the man, there can be little doubt that the students' own musical aspirations are encouraged to thrive in this atmosphere. Blake's own music has always seemed to breathe naturally, it is never technically wanting, but his is a love affair with his instrument. It is a liaison that unashamedly exposes the man to his audiences, and one that will not allow musical prejudice to balk his creative expression.

Records:

- (1) *The Newest Sound Around*
RCA PL 42863
- (2) *Breakthru*
Improvising Artists Inc 37 38 42
- (3) *Wende*
Owl 05
- (4) *Crystal Trip*
Horo HZ 06
- (5) *Open City*
Horo HDP 7-8
- (6) *Realization Of A Dream*
Owl 012
- (7) *Third Stream Re-composition*
Owl 017
- (8) *Film Noir*
Arista AN 3019

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EARLY EVENING Jazz



In an unprecedented and welcome piece of programming, a unique and stimulating musical event took place in London this year which brought together women players of all musical persuasions and nationalities. VAL WILMER was there with notebook and Nikon...

Scene: A 'jazz' festival somewhere in Europe. Participants: A Famous German Male Pianist (alleged to be an aristocrat), a group of women musicians. The pianist is beside himself with anger because women have been included on the festival bill. He berates the organizers: 'Why on earth did you invite these women who can't play? You should have come to me - I could have recommended lots of groups of men who can play!'

The story, a true one, is well known among women improvisers. It is repeated here only because there are still some people who think that women have only themselves to blame for an unrepresentative showing in the arts.

The musicians in question were the Feminist Improvising Group (FIG). They play with notable success in Europe, yet their desire for autonomy - like that of many women's, and other oppressed groups - is still sometimes misunderstood. (Despite their name, FIG actually get asked why they have no men in the group!) Four of them - Maggie Nicols (voice), Irene Schweizer (piano), Corinne Lienzol (trumpet) and Lindsay Cooper (reeds) were among the many women who took over London's Drill Hall for the first half of May - 'Early Evening Jazz'

being their contribution to the nationwide celebration entitled 'Women Live'.

Women improvisers were to be heard at several other venues during the month, in fact. Lindsay Cooper, despite her European work and tours with the Westbrook Orchestra, has never found her hometown a great source of employment. But she was working non-stop in May. Rushing from the ICA to the LMC and back again, she noted - she said - a certain irony in 'Working so much in London after a complete career of never doing much in London!'

But, for many of those women whose work is a little nearer the mainstream, working has not been the problem as much as recognition. Anyone familiar with the many fine musicians who play at women's and 'alternative'

events knows about bands like the Guest Stars and Jam Today. Smokey-voiced Jan Ponsford, who sang with her own group at the festival, with the 15-piece Lydia D'Ustebyn (geddit?) Swing Orchestra and the a capella Hipscats, is seldom without a couple of residencies each week. Trombonist Annie Whitehead is in demand for reggae, soul and salsa sessions, other women work in shows or go on the road with Ivy Benson. Kathy Stobart's saxophone has hardly stayed in its case since she started playing in wartime.

Highspots at the Drill Hall included Irene Schweizer's acerbic piano; Vibe Robinson's rugged, free, bass; Sue Ellery's winsome blues; and, though I regret having had to miss her gig, the superlative singer Norma Winstone who appeared in duo with



Julia Doyle



Irene Schweizer & Lindsay Cooper



The Lydia D'Ustebyn String Orchestra



Sylvia Hallett & Friends

pianist-husband John Taylor. But sheer pleasure in the doing pervaded the fortnight. It was a quality that others, unaccustomed to the atmosphere of women's events, were quick to relate to. And many cited the hilarious duet between the ubiquitous Maggie Nicols and 'semi-retired' Julie Tippetts as the ultimate moment in zany, inspired, spontaneity.

The music is serious, too, of course. For these musicians — as for most others — it's as serious as life itself. But during the festival there was little of that dreadful *macho* urge to be constantly proving something. Which is not to say that the excitement was missing. With a singer like Laka Daisygal shouting like Aretha over the Lydia D'Ustebyn team, Annie Whitehead playing the *profoudest* trombone I've heard in a

long time, or saxophonists Angele Veltmeijer and Ruthie Smith just getting funkier all the time, the players made it clear that excitement is no more a male prerogative than constructing an intelligent solo.

For me, to watch the smile on Deirdre Cartwright's face as she sofoed in a jaunty fashion, finding constant pleasure in playing her guitar, was an exhilarating experience; similarly, to see the accomplished drummer Josefina Cupido reading off the parts she hadn't had time to rehearse, then swinging the big band till the audience couldn't sit still any longer.

It is an experience the Drill Hall intends to repeat. In the meantime, women play on, every day, all over the planet. Seek them out.

WHO APPEARED IN EARLY EVENING JAZZ AT THE DRILL HALL

A Women Live May '82 event (4th to 15th May).

THE GUEST STARS
Six-piece band

THE LYDIA D'USTEBYN
SWING ORCHESTRA with
guests LAKA DAISYGAL and
JAN ITOR

THE GAIL THOMPSON
QUARTET

THE JAN PONSFORD
QUINTET

MAGGIE NICOLS and JULIE
TIPPETTS

THE IDA HEADACHE TRIO

IRENE SCHWEITZER and
MAGGIE NICOLS

CONTRADICTIONS with
LINDSAY COOPER, VIBE
ROBINSON and CORINNE
LIENSOL.

SYLVIA HALLETT and
friends

JAM TODAY

THE NICKY SCOTT-
FRANCIS QUINTET

NORMA WINSTONE and
JOHN TAYLOR

JANE SHORTER'S
LONGSHOTS

THE HIPSCATS

KATHY STOBART
QUINTET



Kathy Stobart



Jenny Fraser of Lydia D'Ustebyn

SCATting & BOPPING

Spanning vocal gymnasts from JEFFERSON to JORDAN, Kevin Henriques jogs our collective memory about the all-too-often unsung heroes of 'Oop-Bop-a-Da'...

One of the hoary legends of jazz is that Louis Armstrong accidentally invented scat singing in the mid-1920s during a recording of 'Heebie Jeebies' when his song-sheet fell on the floor and he filled in with a string of meaningless phrases which conveyed unquestionable jazz feeling.

Whatever the truth behind the evolution of this form of vocal jazz expression, there is no doubt that scatting, associated by most of the general public with the redoubtable Ella Fitzgerald, has become an integral part of the music along with vocalese. This latter is the fitting of lyrics to an instrumental solo as exemplified by Annie Ross's words to Wardell Gray's 'Twisted'.

As with scatting, the origins of vocalese are somewhat misty. Most of the original proponents of both scatting and vocalese are now dead and a lot of the true history of the evolution of this facet of jazz is either buried with them or perpetuated uncertainly by a number of well-publicized and sometimes exaggerated claims made by all concerned.

It seems fairly certain that vocalese was originated by singer/tap dancer Eddie Jefferson who was shot dead in Detroit in May 1979 after finishing a gig. His facility for devising stories around the solos of leading instrumentalists is said to have begun in the late 1930s but did not catch on publicly until the 1940s. Following his working association with Coleman Hawkins he wrote lyrics for the tenorist's classic 'Body and Soul'.

Jefferson's best known and most acclaimed vocalese was for James Moody's solo on 'I'm In the Mood for Love'. Yet Jefferson moved with the times, adding to his repertoire vocalese versions of Miles Davis' 'Bitches Brew' and Eddie Harris' 'Freedom Jazz Dance'. In the latter part of his career he was associated, both live and on record, with altoist Richie Cole and (surprise, surprise!) was well into his fifties



when in a *Down Beat* critics' poll he won the 'Talent Deserving of Wider Recognition' section.

The unfortunate aspect of the Eddie Jefferson story is that, not for the first time in jazz, someone else got a lot of credit for his work, namely King Pleasure, alias Clarence Beeks, who died of a heart attack in March 1981.

Pleasure was undoubtedly a pioneer of vocalese and it was his lyrics to 'I'm In the Mood for Love' which brought him to public notice in the early 1950s after Jefferson had initiated his efforts in this field. But it has to be admitted that it was Pleasure's recordings for Prestige which sparked the wider interest in vocalese and the formation of such groups as Lambert, Hendricks and Ross.

The mention of this gymnastically vocal trio inevitable means considering the strong claims of Dave Lambert (killed in a tragic road accident in 1966) as the first ever bebop singer. Leonard Feather in his *Encyclopedia of Jazz* affirms that Lambert 'was the first to translate the new ideas of bop musicians into effective vocal terms'.

There is strong evidence that the Dave Lambert-Buddy Stewart vocal duet on 'What's This?' with the Gene Krupa band in 1945 was the first-ever bop

vocal record. Lambert, a genial being, was fond of referring to himself in the 1960s (when he was in his forties) as 'the world's oldest bebop singer'.

The vocalese contributions of the third member of the L-H-R team, Jon Hendricks, were no less formidable - he even appears on a King Pleasure Prestige album. But it was not until he joined with Dave Lambert and Annie Ross that his ability as a word-fixer to melodies blos-

somed, as for example his lyrics to Neal Hefti's 'Li'l Dartin' and to Horace Silver's 'Doodlin'.

Two other, now deceased, personalities who cannot be overlooked in any survey of bebop/scat singers are Joe Carroll (who died of a heart attack in 1981) and Babs Gonzales (who died of cancer the previous year).

Carroll is remembered mostly for his association with Dizzy Gillespie (himself a bebop vocalist of no little ability!), from 1945 until 1953. He also sang with the Woody Herman band in the 1960s.

Gonzales was one of the most colourful personalities ever in jazz. Following the formation of his group, Babs' Three Bips and a Bop, in 1946, he went on to compose 'Oop-Bop-a-Da', which was a hit for the Gillespie band, and 'Bebop Santa Claus'.

Interestingly, Gonzales (born Lee Brown) denied he was a scat singer. 'I am a jazz singer, not a scat singer' he declared firmly. 'Scat is a technical way of interpreting a melody in an onomatopoeic way', he said. He further claimed that scat singers did not improvise and alleged that when Joe Carroll sang with Gillespie he did so aided by some form of arrangements.

Gonzales worked with tenor-saxist James Moody and while

SCATting & BOPPING

Babs Gonzales (left)
Eddie Jefferson (right)
Joe Carroll (below)

ALL PICTURES: VAL WILMER



with him recorded 'Sugar Ray' (a tribute to boxer Sugar Robinson) and 'Cool Whalin'. This last title prompts an appropriate and perhaps overdue mention of the Spotlite album of that name (SPJ135) which contains 17 bebop vocals by six singers - Jefferson, Gonzales, Carroll, Earl



Coleman, Kenny 'Pancho' Hagood and Frankie Passions. The album is the best possible aural introduction to the mysteries of scatting, bopping and plain ol' jazz singing!

Regarding this last, sleeve-writer Alun Morgan writes that this 'category is probably the most

difficult to define for it is simply the interpretation of a song by someone with an acute appreciation of jazz'. Certainly, one would not dispute the inclusion of seven tracks by Hagood (another ex-Gillespie singer), including Gonzales' 'Oop-Bop-a-Da', for he is

Cont Page 16



Betty Carter



Dave Lambert

Jon Hendricks



Annie Ross

SCATTING & BOPPING

clearly an able scatter and imbues lyrics with a definite jazz feeling. But Earl Coleman, admittedly much favoured by Charlie Parker, is no more than a lesser Billy Eckstine and the two Passions' tracks are surely included because the pianist on this obscure session is Thelonius Monk.

It is a pity the Spotlight collection does not include examples of the work of the one man I contend is the most unjustly forgotten personality in this scatin', boppin' realm, namely Leo Watson born 1898, died 1950. Watson's career was bound up mostly with a swinging novelty group called the Spirits of Rhythm with which he was singer as well as player of the tiddle, a stringed instrument somewhere between a guitar and ukulele.

Watson's scatin' in the 1930s was of such outlandishness that it was never taken seriously at the time. But it was of a pioneering quality which pre-dated the vocal contortions of those who followed in this field. For Whitney Balliett, admittedly prone to sweeping, dogmatic statements, Watson was the greatest of all scat singers adding that 'in his special way, (he) was a genius'. Unfortunately, Watson's recording output was not high and there has yet to be the deserved resurgence of interest in this key character in the evolution of scatin'.

Some other lesser-known bop singers merit passing mention. First the singer/guitarist Jackie Paris, practically unknown in Britain, but responsible for some quality albums in the 1950s and for one in the 1960s, *The Song is Paris*, which has become a collector's item.

Secondly, for purely personal reasons, because his carefree attitude epitomizes for me the general zaniness and good-natured humour of all those involved in bopping and scatin', singer/pianist Harry 'The Hipster' Gibson. Another Charlie Parker contemporary, Gibson delivered such wondrous ditties as 'Frantic Ferdinand the 4-F Freak' and 'Who Put the Benzadrine in Mrs Murphy's Ovaltine?' - which I have yet to hear on *Jazz Record Requests* but which can be found on the Stash label (ST 100).

The third man I would single out is another pianist/singer, Bob Dorough, a deceptive veteran, a distinctive vocalist with a hard keyboard style, both rooted in bop, as he showed on his London

engagement at The Canteen earlier this year.

No, albeit superficial, survey of the leading figures in the world of bop/scat singing would be complete without rightful obeisance being made to two of the greatest exponents living, namely Betty Carter and Sheila Jordan. Both have astonished British audiences in recent months with their extraordinary vocal command.

Like almost everyone mentioned here Betty Carter is a profoundly musically singer. She improvises as intensely as a horn-player, holding notes, climbing, falling, smearing, doing things in front of and behind the beat, scatin' and leaving no doubt that it was not a mere gimmick that she was once known as Betty 'Bebop' Carter. Like many of her contemporaries, she was heavily influenced by Parker and acknowledges her style evolved through listening to horn men, not other singers. Additionally, she has some perceptive observations on jazz vocalization: 'Most of the male singers who could scat didn't have great voices and the voices could only sing ballads. But most of the female singers could swing'.

Sheila Jordan likewise openly acknowledges Parker as her inspiration. She began her jazz career in the late 1940s with a bebop vocal group - 'We'd scat and write words to Parker tunes' - and today, though she is involved in all aspects of vocal activity including free music, calls herself a 'bebopper'.

Listening to her, one is acutely aware she is one of the great jazz improvisers, the way she uses words like putty, moulding them into a shape which is never ugly, always interesting. Her phrasing and timing are death-defying. Like great horn-players, boppers especially, she takes real risks on that tightrope. Her version of 'You Are My Sunshine' has become almost legendary but listen to her scatin'/singing on 'I Remember You' and Charlie Parker's 'Confirmation' on the recent ECM live recording *Last Year's Waltz* (ECM 1213) and you will understand and realize what superior bop singing and scatin' is.

Sheila Jordan is an appropriate person to conclude this short, incomplete, survey of those who have left their indelible mark in this facet of jazz. No doubt that several worthy practitioners of the form have been left out and no doubt readers of this new magazine will be impelled to write and let us know about them and maybe set in motion a renewal of interest in some of the most captivating and screwball characters jazz has seen.

ERIC DOLPHY

ERIC DOLPHY who died on 28th June, 1964, is only now belatedly being given credit for influencing the music that subsequently developed from the heady days of the Sixties' revolutionaries.

Here, Stephen Burgen pays tribute to a gentle genius.

The brief career of Eric Dolphy evokes, perhaps more than any other, the saying that rebels are hunted in their lifetimes and praised in their graves.

A quiet man - completely absorbed in his music - bigotry and conservatism drove him to a lonely death at the age of 34. While the profession of 'jazz' musician has never been one noted for the longevity of its members, faced as they are with racism, poverty, isolation and the escape into drugs and alcohol, many attributed Dolphy's untimely death directly to his inability to work as a musician in the US. When the news reached Charles Mingus, he was so enraged he smashed his new bass to pulp in front of a bewildered audience.

When the music known variously as 'avant-garde', 'free-form' or the 'new thing' began emerging from New York in the late Fifties it wasn't at all well received by the established critics, journals and record companies. The influential *Down Beat* magazine in particular seemed determined to keep the music off the air and off the bandstand. The avant-garde was dismissed with the epithet 'anti-jazz'. It was claimed that, rather than from a need to push forward the boundaries of self-expression, the 'free' approach to improvisation derived from a technical incompetence to play in the old, accepted ways. Furthermore, it was said to deflect attention from the musicians' obvious lack of talent; many exponents of the new music espoused radical politics, in particular those of Martin Luther King and, worse still, Malcolm X.

This barrage of hostility had the (desired) effect of keeping the music in relative obscurity. The most politically outspoken - notably Archie Shepp, Cecil Taylor,

Max Roach and Charles Mingus - found it nearly impossible to work for several years. As Shepp remarked in 1965 - 'I've been in this business for 15 years and I've never worked as a musician for a solid week in this country. I've never made my living playing jazz'.

As for Dolphy, his working options began to narrow after he joined John Coltrane. The Coltrane group was then the *bête-noire* of the critics and Dolphy's association with them confirmed the suspicion that he, too, was a 'bad nigger'. In the circumstances, it's fortunate that this group was recorded live on a few occasions, preserving some of both Dolphy and Coltrane's finest performances.

It was as an instrumentalist, not a band leader, that Dolphy worked most often and is best remembered (he only recorded with his own groups during the last four years of his life). The integration of his startling and passionate playing on flute, alto sax and bass clarinet into the work of Coltrane, Mingus, Ornette Coleman and Max Roach invariably raised the level of the music of even these exceptionally gifted musicians to something quite special. And even in less illustrious company, Dolphy's solos stand out, with their Monkish construction, precise timing and intensity of feeling.

However, few of his recordings were issued in his lifetime and, unable to make a living playing music in the States, he set off for Europe remarking - 'I can get more work there playing my own music, because if you try to do anything different in this country people put you down for it'.

He died shortly afterwards in Berlin of undiagnosed diabetes. A year later, the critics voted him a place in the *Down Beat* 'Hall of Fame'. A memorial album, released soon after his death, sported reverent liner notes by a critic who had pilloried Dolphy throughout his brief career.

This poem, which takes its title from a conversational duet Dolphy performed with Mingus, is dedicated to his memory and his music.

In the next issue, we hope to publish a complete Eric Dolphy discography.

WHAT LOVE

for Eric Dolphy 1928-1964

And now, now that you're gone
their pens sag beneath superlatives
The same hands that wrote you off,
called you clownish, incompetent
Those same critics and impresarios
who starved you into exile
wax fat on the back of your memorials.

They'd never come clean.
Hateful, afraid they covered their ears
condemning your music to attics and dives
How could they,
white champions of black America,
admit the music sounded not half so bad
as the nigger who played it.
Like Ayler and Shepp,
Mingus and Coltrane – just
another crazy, noisy nigger.

Eric, you blow through
some district between pain and rapture
and I choke on the smiles you raise

You brood on sorrow
until the long note shatters, until joy soars out
singing then falls again, shot to pieces
squawking to hounds

Distressed, you come in complaining
in the lower register, forcing a smile,
a jittery laugh rising to a scream
resolved in sweetness. Wistful,
ironic, winking at pain.

A soft seditious soul
armed with reeds, urbane
guerrilla of the bandstand.
They lynched you finally in Berlin
without hoods or firebrands.
Debts around your neck
and sugar in your blood.

STEPHEN BURGEN



ERIC DOLPHY

SEVEN STEPS TO JAZZ



With the heavy influence that jazz now has on popular music, there are a lot of people new to jazz sounds who, perhaps, don't know where it came from.

Charles Fox's *Seven Steps to Jazz* is a layman's guide to the people who made it happen, starting with one of the mightiest instruments of jazz expression – the trumpet.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (1900-1971)

No musician, whatever instrument he played, remained unaffected by Armstrong during the decade that led up to the Second World War. It was not only his phrasing and where he placed the notes, but his attack, the way he used the trumpet. The first virtuosic jazz soloist, Armstrong's star rose as collective improvising declined. Yet, ironically enough, his first great recordings – with his Hot Five and Hot Seven – were devised to cater for those blacks who had migrated from New Orleans to Chicago and liked to be reminded of the goings-on they had left behind. But Armstrong elbowed his way to the fore, going on to provide a syntax for the would-be improviser. Nothing in jazz was more adventurous than Armstrong's duet with Earl Hines on 'Weather Bird', nothing more majestic than his playing in 'West End Blues'.

BIX BEIDERBECKE (1903-1931)

If Armstrong at his finest conjured up a species of cosmic grandeur, Bix inhabited a more careful world. His lyricism worked on a smaller scale: Jane Austen, say, rather than Tolstoy, pursuing a more accessible perfection. The years he spent in Paul Whiteman's Orchestra used to be viewed as cramping his talents; in fact, he was beguiled by the cultural overlap, admiring Ferdé Grofé just as he did Debussy and, more improbably, Eastwood Lane. And Bix was the only jazz trumpeter – well, cornetist in his case – who seemed much more interested in playing the piano. 'Singin' the Blues' which he made with Frankie Trumbauer in 1927, was the first 'ballad' recording. Never at home with real blues, Bix could combine charm with introspection, foreshadowing what Miles Davis and Bill Evans would get up to a quarter-of-a-century later.

HENRY 'RED' ALLEN (1908-1967)

The fundamentalist vision of jazz history sees Armstrong as passing the torch to Roy Eldridge, who handed it to Dizzy Gillespie, with Bix left on a sideline, a token heretic. Which ignores 'Red' Allen, hailed by Don Ellis in the Sixties as 'the most avant-garde trumpeter in jazz'. That claim was even more justifiable 30 years earlier, when Allen floated across bar-lines as Armstrong did not care to do, his bold flourishes hinting at harmonies, implying – as Miles Davis would – more notes than he actually blew. In humdrum situations Allen could fall back upon showy routines, rhetoric deployed for its own sake, yet no blues trumpet solo sounds better than the one he takes in 'Feelin' Drowsy'. And almost up to his death he could still maintain that tricky balance between exuberance and sobriety, between technical adventure and emotional understanding.

ROY ELDRIDGE (1911)

Most trumpeters begin by copying other trumpeters. Certainly Eldridge admired both Red Nichols and Louis Armstrong early on, but he was most influenced by saxophone players – and especially by Coleman Hawkins. Which helps to explain the speed and the contours of many of his solos. Unlike Armstrong and Allen, Eldridge had no background in New Orleans, nor unlike Bix any particular liking for Dixieland jazz. What he epitomized – and still does – is the spirit of the jam session, that musical free-for-all. By the late 1930s, Eldridge's style – hectic, somersaulting, everything that is meant by bravura – was being imitated by the sharper young trumpeters. He worked in big bands, both black (Fletcher Henderson) and white (Gene Krupa), but his fiercely competitive approach flourishes best in small groups. Some of his finest playing – notably in 'This Year's Kisses' – can be heard on a 1956 recording with Teddy Wilson and Lester Young, made when he was already an elder statesman rather than a pioneer, yet characteristically zestful.

DIZZY GILLESPIE (1917)

When Lionel Hampton's 'Hot Mallets' was released in 1939, jazz aficionados – in Britain, anyway – were convinced that the 'Dizzy Gillespie' listed as playing trumpet was really a pseudonym for Roy Eldridge. Few overlaps in jazz seem more tidy or inevitable than the way Gillespie adopted Eldridge's virtuosic manner, moulding it into a style which incorporated the harmonic and rhythmic innovations that surfaced during the Forties. Nothing encapsulates the heady excitements of bebop more than Gillespie's breakneck yet immaculate playing in 'Anthropology', recorded in 1946. More than most of his contemporaries, Gillespie enjoyed polyrhythms, especially the Afro-Cuban blend. And while he belonged to that group of players who according to legend turned their backs on the audience, putting musical curiosity before public demand, Gillespie developed into a performer whose desire to entertain was almost as compulsive as that of Armstrong or Fats Waller.

MILES DAVIS (1926)

Accepting your limitations can be as important as possessing ambition. Like most young trumpeters of his age, Davis began by trying to copy Dizzy Gillespie, but glimpsed his mistake and concentrated instead on middle register playing and individual harmonic stance. The least skilled, in a purely instrumental sense, of these seven trumpeters, Davis is nevertheless one of the most important musicians in jazz. Most innovators have been content with a single breakthrough. Davis was involved with the pioneering of so-called 'cool' jazz, of 'modal jazz' (his LP, *Kind of Blue*, must be the most influential record in jazz history), of jazz-rock at the end of the Sixties. Which does not indicate anything like the full extent of his contributions: the clusters of notes, making a solo *pointilliste* as much as linear; the use of the Harmon mute, accentuating the wistful calm of his ballad playing, as personal as a man reading entries from his diary.

DON CHERRY (1936)

The unfairness of selecting only seven trumpet players gets underlined by the omission of Clifford Brown, Booker Little – and Fats Navarro, who Don Cherry once described as 'the only trumpeter I really cared to copy phrases from'. Half-black, half-Cherokee Indian, Cherry was born in Oklahoma but raised in Watts. He played in r&b bands and listened to bebop before becoming Ornette Coleman's front-line partner. In those days, Cherry used a small pocket trumpet (he later switched to cornet), creating lines that were suitably austere. He qualifies as the first 'free' trumpeter, but his work has always had the discipline of a man who grew up playing bebop, knowing that rules are always necessary – even if you have to invent your own. 'Lonely Woman' (from Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz To Come*) shows how it is possible to be untethered yet logical and lyrical. When Cherry was listening to Navarro, he also took an interest in Mexican trumpeters, French horn players and musicians who blew into conch shells, an eclecticism that has widened and deepened and gets reflected in the international ambience of his later work.



Don Cherry



Miles Davis



Henry "Red" Allen



Roy Eldridge



Dizzy Gillespie



1-3. Dexter Gordon in demonstrative mood . . .
4. . . but he does stop to listen to Johnny Griffin.

5-7. Three of the Week's drummers - Billy Higgins,
Eddie Gladden and Therman Barker.

8. Muhai Richard Abrams.
9. Treavor Watt's Motre Music.

Another Camden Jazz Week come and gone, but the March '82 event was not un-recorded. Jak Kilby provides a picture reminder of some of the people who played and, in the case of the Art Ensemble, mimed.

CAMDEN



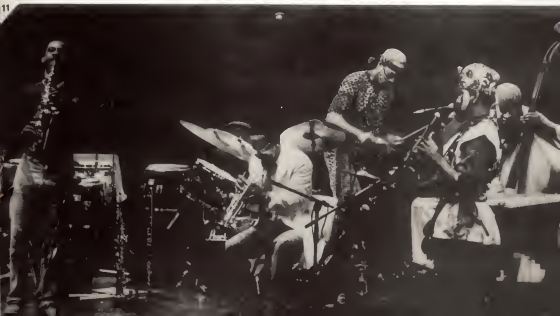


10. Timeless All-Stars - L. to R, Messrs Walton, Hutcherson, Fuller, Williams and Land.

11. The Art Ensemble of Chicago on their second night.

ON CAMERA

ALL PICTURES: JAK KILBY



Behind the Beat of the Different Drummer

Skip Laszlo talks with drummer MAX ROACH about his views on music, society and politics. The original interview took place on 6th July, 1980, at the Bracknell Jazz Festival. This is its first full publication.

There is simply no way to overstate the contribution to music made by drummer Max Roach.

According to Roach, however, two of every three beats drummers play come from Jo Jones, the rhythmic ace behind the Count Basie sound in the heyday of swing. Without degrading Jones' contribution, many would pin that achievement on Roach himself.

One of the young iconoclasts of jazz in the Forties, Roach — more than any other — contributed to the radical freeing of the rhythms of this music. In so doing, he not only laid the foundations built upon by Charlie Parker in their fruitful years together (and he was only 16 when he started playing with Parker), he also brought the drums out of the background and made them a full contributing member of the band. The developments we have enjoyed since then, stem from this achievement. Pioneered by Kenny Clarke, and developed by such as Art Blakey at the same time, this contribution was not unique to Roach. But he was at the heart of it.

The cruel cauldron that fostered this revolution killed many of its pioneers. Charlie Christian the guitarist did live to see his 23rd birthday. Charlie Parker died in his thirties. And yet the full story of this period — the story of 52nd Street in New York — has yet to be told by one of its participants. But that is soon to change. Max Roach has been working on a book about the period. In completing it, he will be doing just what he has always done in his life: making a political statement by contributing to black music and contributing to the music by making political statements.

The progress of black music has always been linked to the political developments of blacks in American society. Archie Shepp said that what Malcolm X said politically, John Coltrane played musically. But, occasionally, the link is expressed in the same person. Shepp himself is an example. The veteran, though, is Max Roach.

Appropriately, Max Roach today is both a university professor — teaching black studies — and a musician. He does not believe



'The common people proclaimed Louis Armstrong a musician, not a conservatory . . .'

'This music that challenges the music challenges society . . .'

'Jazz allows you to sound 50 when you are 50. When you are 19, you should sound 19 . . .'

music and society can be separated, and he has never stopped changing both. Indeed, when I interviewed him, we talked as much about politics as about music. And, when he went on stage right after our discussion, he completed the interview in the middle of his set.

We had been talking about the breakthroughs in the music and whether, in hindsight, swing and bebop could still be regarded as 'revolutionary' developments.

Roach pulled his high-hat and drum stool out in front of the kit and started explaining his next solo to the audience.

'This instrument, the high-hat or foot cymbal, was introduced to the kit by Jonathan David Samuel Jones — its innovator. If you think how an Afro-American got a name like that, you understand what slavery is all about.'

'Jones was a great inspiration for me as a youth. He swept into town with the great Count Basie band when New York was taken by storm by the music called

'swing', whatever that is — revolutionary music, that is what it was. This solo is called "Papa Jones".' (It was recorded on his Hat Hut LP with Archie Shepp, *The Long March*.)

Actually, Roach — like many musicians — shuns both the name 'jazz' and the various period labels. 'I prefer to call it after the musician — the music of Count Basie, or Duke Ellington, or the music of Charlie Parker. I think our society needs labels so it can take our music and file it away.'

Roach said the name bebop 'came from a song Dizzy wrote', but he liked the definition I quoted from Langston Hughes' fictitious character Simple.

'I will have to use that line,' Roach said. 'I agree with Langston Hughes — he was a poet, a great poet, you know.'

As Simple told Hughes: 'You must know where the name Bop comes from,' said Simple, astonished at my ignorance.

'I do not know,' I said. 'Where?' 'From the police,' said Simple.

'What do you mean, from the police?'

'From the police beating Negroes' heads,' said Simple. 'Every time a cop hits a Negro with his billy club, that old club said, "BOP! BOP! . . . MOP! . . . BOP!"'

'That Negro hollers, "Oooool-ya-hoo! Ou-o-o!"'

'Old cop just keeps on, "MOP! MOP! . . . BE-BOP! . . . MOP!" That's where Be-Bop came from, beaten right out of some Negro's head into them horns and saxophones and keys that plays it . . .'

Roach explains the development of jazz – or Afro-American art music – politically.

'Jazz has always been under attack from the days of Buddy Bolden, before Kid Ory, right up to today. Bolden because he improvised. In the Twenties, they had "race" records, and decent people weren't supposed to listen because the music came from black people who weren't "civilized". It was an outlet to protest at the indignities faced by black people.

'Now it frees people all over the world.'

Roach continued his explanation of the radical nature of each phase in jazz, pointing out both its contrast to European music and the link between apparently counterposed phases of the music.

'Politically, I see jazz as very democratic music. It expresses democracy whereas European classical music expresses imperialism. European music is run by two people – the composer and the conductor who treat the rest of the musicians as slaves.

'In jazz, we debate a topic, the musicians are free to discuss it. It's like a meeting.

'Most musicians are in a vulnerable position. So, musicians are generally apolitical. But jazz has introduced a new fellowship among people the world over. It lets each generation speak. A Coleman Hawkins doesn't prevent the development of a Lester Young, and he doesn't prevent a John Coltrane. You got Louis Armstrong but you can have a Freddie Hubbard. In our music we don't have anything like "Bach is God". It challenges what is.'

There is no love lost between Roach and the white critics who have hounded him as much for his political views as for linking them with the music.

'Music critics puzzle me. I don't think they even know what jazz is. They separate art from society, hut art grows from society.'

Roach has a long and distinguished political career. Along with the late Charles Mingus, Roach has long been one of the musicians who openly articulated the oppression of blacks and championed their liberation. The ire of the critics was especially drawn when the musicians did so in their music. Mingus had the lyrics of his 'Fables of Faubus' dropped in the first recorded version*.

Roach was attacked by *Down Beat* magazine for calling a piece of music 'Garvey's Ghost' which, it said, 'is heroic and grandiose in conception and feeling, giving rise to a picture oddly at variance with what is known of his [Garvey's] "leadership".'

On the album in question (the 1961 *Percussion Bitterweet*), Roach not only asserted what reggae commonly asserts about Garvey today but also, said a piece on the LP called 'Mama', 'does not look at women in the romantic sense, but rather as strong, self-sufficient human beings who take an active part in world problems'. The white critics got their way and the album got him hanned from the studios for five years. His view of the period is one of hope, though.

'The Sixties was the time of the anti-war movement, the black movement... The US is not a homogenous society but that was a time of people coming together to speak with one mind. All these movements worked in the same direction and we made gains. The government learned how to defuse this and now these gains are under attack.

'Most people believe the Sixties was an isolated period, but it wasn't. There is only one instance of a city being bombed in the United States and it was by the government, to put down a race riot in Oklahoma in 1918. We have the oppression of black people, you in Britain have Ireland; it's the same thing – imperialism.

'But the USA will always produce Malcolm Xs, W.E.B. Du Bois's, Marcus Garveys and Martin Luther Kings. Just as American society is very stubborn about preserving oppression, resistance keeps being generated. There were many elements responsible for the events of the Sixties – court decisions forcing integration in public places, on buses, the opening of universities to black people, the resurgence of the popularity of socialist ideas, the student movement demanding a say in the running of their lives.'

This was also the period when black nationalism's rise in the black communities across the US went hand-in-hand with the rise of a new revolution in black art music. I asked Roach where he saw the music going now?

'I hear new sounds like Anthony Braxton. Musicians like him are thumbing their noses at becoming millionaires. What they are doing is like what we did back in the Forties, creating music instead of just trying to create money.'

So, does Roach resent soul or disco music?

'I don't resent disco music, I resent the fact that other music doesn't get equal time. I'm not saying don't play disco, I'm saying that we aren't getting a balanced diet. OK, we need entertainment. But no-one thinks any more. Disco and *The Empire Strikes Back* are escapism. I just think reality should get a hearing, too. Because jazz makes people think about change, it is kept off the air.'

As he had told me earlier, 'this music that challenges the music also challenges society'. The conscious linking of social and musical challenge plays an important part in the work he has done with avant-garde players in recent years.

'I have wanted to play with Cecil Taylor for a long time but I first set myself a number of projects in the same vein. [Two LPs have emerged from this collaboration, the most recent being the double live *Hat Hut* LP mentioned above.] Then I wanted to do a duo with Dollar Brand. I figured that as we both came from the same kind of oppressive and racist society, we could come together and play without even rehearsing, and it worked this way.

'Then I recorded a duo with Anthony Braxton whom I have already spoken about. When I

'We are in good company, though; Louis Armstrong was a revolutionary. Before him you had to come out of a conservatory to be called a great musician. But he used improvisation and he revolutionized music with his playing. The common people proclaimed him a musician, not a conservatory.'

On the theme of other musicians, we also discussed a more sombre note. I asked him if he thought several musicians who had also refused to commercialize their music were hounded to an early death, namely Charlie Parker, Eric Dolphy and Billie Holiday.

'Parker and Dolphy maybe gave too much of themselves to the music. When I agonized over the untimely death of Clifford Brown [in 1956], a friend of mine said, "Max, Clifford paid his dues, maybe you still have yours to pay." Maybe so.'

Most would say Roach's dues are well and truly in credit.

On Billie Holiday, Roach returned to his theme of how the music grows.

'In a comment he later retracted, critic Leonard Feather attacked Billie Holiday's last album *Lady in Satin*...'

After she was dead?

'Yes, that is so. He attacked it because she didn't sound like she did when she was 21 and playing

'No-one thinks any more. Disco and *The Empire Strikes Back* are escapism...'

'Because jazz makes people think about change, it is kept off the air...'

was ready to record with Cecil, a student group at Columbia organized the concert [in 1980] and we organized the recording session later. [This, unfortunately, has yet to find a company willing to release it.]

'These people, Cecil and I, have a special kinship; we are alike in many ways. We make a political statement with our music. We share a desire to make music. Some musicians, very talented musicians, have told me how they just want to "make a platinum". But we can't do this; we don't want to make bland music. Cecil and I have chosen a different course in our lives; we have chosen to create music.

'And, as the music is improvised, you know how Cecil or Anthony Braxton or I rehearse? We sit and talk, like you and I have been doing. We talk about society and politics. We are swimming upstream, we know, however this is what we have elected to do. But to play with Cecil is truly rewarding, both artistically and socio-politically.

with Count Basie. But jazz allows you to sound 50 when you are 50. When you are 19, you should sound 19. Jazz allows you to tell the truth – be who you are. I loved that record, it told a lot about her life, about her loves, her emotional up-and-downs, what she had been through.'

I have an interesting sidelight on this comment. When I used this quote in an earlier article on Roach, an irate reader wrote to the paper calling Roach a 'loonie' spouting 'incoherent rubbish'. Val Wilmer, a jazz writer with a long history of telling the musicians' side of things, wrote back: 'For the record, although this album was cut when the singer was a shadow of her former self, it is regarded by musicians and listeners alike as one of her classic recordings. As a reflection of the way America destroys its most talented individuals, it is deeply – painfully – moving, yet it is the music's ability to convey the personal history of the artist which, as Roach points out, sets it apart.'

Bitterly resentful of black oppression, Holiday none the less did not have a political outlook for how to change the world. This is what sets Roach and the next generation – most markedly Archie Shepp – apart.

I asked Roach if he derived hope for his views from the bigger audiences 'avant-garde' music was drawing around the world?

'Big audiences show a musical and political bigger following. At our Columbia concert, it was a different audience that came. It was full of radicals and Civil Rights' type people. Even radical judges who are refusing to charge bail in New York were there. Political people can now pack our concerts. And I noticed a lot of avant-garde musicians, but few of the mainstream musicians.'

'You see, this music is very political. Improvisation allows new ideas and it stimulates ideas, musically and socially as well. In Europe, political – very political – people are drawn to jazz. In Portugal, giant concerts are organized for us and the Left organizes them.'

Asked how he would define himself, Roach replied, 'In the States, I would be called a socialist. I am just for monetary change so the masses get a big share of the wealth.'

And his future plans?

'I want now to get my biography finished. It is being written by a black poet who was around Imanu Barak [Leroi Jones] called Larry Neal. I want to give my views and I think it is important to explain things like what happened to us on 52nd Street, what Charlie Parker and I did, and why things happened at that time.'

Roach was called to the stage – finishing the interview, as I have said, in the interval of his set – but he stopped me thanking him for the interview.

'No, no, let me thank you,' he said. 'You and I have been talking about the things I'm interested in – society and politics. Most interviewers just want to know where I was born and how long I've been playing.'

And if you want to know that, well, read the biography.

And if you want to know how he has been playing, it is hard to find a significant drummer today who hasn't gone on record in praise of his achievements. His name is frequently cited in discussions of other drummers, too. As former Coltrane drummer, Rashied Ali, told Val Wilmer: 'Elvin Jones had to play a very free type of drumming to play with the kind of music that Trane was playing. In other words, when Bird was playing, there had to be a Max Roach around to cope with that style, to make it move.'



JACK HILBY

'European music is run by two people – the composer and the conductor . . .'

'Music critics puzzle me. I don't think they even know what jazz is . . .'

If the rhythm ain't correct, then the group's not happening.'

Roach does not only provide an inspiration by his playing. He is highly regarded as a composer, a leader, an all-round musician; as a teacher and a political activist.

Roach approaches each role the way he plays; with a sophisticated use of understatement without compromising his views. And if the hostile critics haven't figured out why, his myriad followers and admirers have: each of his roles feeds the others like call and response. And the message, as he says, is that 'the music that challenges the music challenges society'.

* Orval Faubus was the racist governor of Arkansas who barred black students from Little Rock high school. Mingus' lyrics called him a sick and ridiculous fool.

† W E B Du Bois, an African-American, led the black intelligentsia during Garvey's time. He was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which played an active role in the Civil Rights movement. Du Bois joined the US Communist Party, lived to be almost 100 years old, and died in Ghana, West Africa, in 1963.

‡ Columbia University is surrounded by Harlem. In the Sixties, it was a celebrated centre of student revolt.

§ See poem on Dolphy in this issue. I am not saying that he died from the same medical causes as Parker and Holiday, but he still died young.



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All too often, the people who form the backbone behind the jazz scene get all too little credit. Without their unfailing support, encouragement and dedication, jazz in this country would struggle to survive.

In this regular series, *The Wire* pays tribute to some of the most significant contributors.

This month, Andrew Turner talks to LEO FEIGIN who, with Leo Records, is helping to break down the 'Iron Curtain' of ignorance...

One of the most individual and intriguing independent record labels to emerge in the last few years has been Leo Records. Formed in 1980 in London, Leo Records has released eight albums to date.

Apart from the diversity of music, the label's significant feature has been the first releases in the West of contemporary jazz from the Soviet Union. The man behind the label is Leo Feigin who emigrated from Russia in 1973 and came to London a year later. How did he come to start the label?

"There were several factors which, taken together, developed into a very strong need to start a label. The most important was that having kept in touch with Russia, I began to realize by the end of the Seventies the Soviet Underground was developing into a unique music scene. However, I noticed that whenever I started to talk about Soviet jazz to anyone, the response was always an understanding, slightly pitying smile. Thus I came to realize that I felt a sense of mission. I must publish this music in the West or it would be totally lost, because the State-owned record company in Russia, Melodiya, only releases a couple of jazz albums a year."

GANELIN TRIO
CHRYSLER



Leo's first Russian release was by the Ganelin Trio (*Live in East Germany*: LR 10Z). How the tape was smuggled to the West is a story in itself in the best tradition of espionage. The release followed an explosive live debut in

the West at the Berenur Jazz Tage in 1980. Famed international critic Joachim Ernst Berendt wrote that their performance 'was the wildest, best organized and most professional free jazz I've heard in years'. Many listeners perceived this music as a cry for freedom. How does Leo explain the appearance of a Russian trio on the international jazz scene?

"People in the oppressed countries of Eastern Europe identify jazz music with freedom. In an oppressed society where you can't express your ideas freely - where all basic human rights are denied to you - the language of music, especially improvised music, becomes symbolic of freedom. It's just about the only means of expression that by its nature cannot be censored."

"People in Eastern Europe treat this music very seriously. For them it's an outlet. That's why in Russia they say that even a dissident is not necessarily a jazz fan. But every jazz fan is a dissident by definition. So you see, whether you like it or not, jazz acquires a political meaning in an oppressed society."

"I don't find it either unusual or surprising that this amazing trio should come from Russia. After all, the Russians have made a tremendous contribution to world culture. To literature they've contributed Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn. To music Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky, Scriabin. So why not improvised music?"

Since the Ganelin Trio's Western debut in Berlin, they have performed many more times, especially in West Germany and Italy. How does Leo explain the willingness of the Soviet authorities to allow the trio to perform in the West?

"I am convinced that the trio gets the chance because the Soviet leaders are great fans of improvised music. For them the Ganelin Trio is a commodity they can say, "Look we also have improvised music in Russia". Second, the trio earns hard currency which is always welcome."



Last year, Leo Records released a second album by the Ganelin Trio - *Con Fuoco* live in Moscow and West Berlin. Plus a record by Russian pianist Serge Kuryokhin, about whom little is known due to his, as yet, non-appearance in the West.



Leo's other, most significant releases have been two records: the American pianist and singer Amina Claudine Myers who Leo Feigin recorded after being impressed by her performance with Lester Bowie in London three years ago, and in particular, her *Salute to Bessie Smith* (LR 103) which has received widespread critical acclaim. In addition, there have been releases by Americans Keshavan Maslak and John Lindberg, both of whom visited Britain last year.

So, what are Leo Feigin's future plans?

"First, as I have a full-time job, I am therefore unable to devote as much time to the label as I would like. Second, whether one likes it or not, all future plans must depend on finance. I am trying to penetrate an "Iron Curtain" of ignorance: two years ago no-one wanted to know about Soviet jazz. Now I feel that people are beginning to sit up and take notice. I receive hundreds of letters from people all over the world who are looking for these records and cannot find them anywhere because distributors are reluctant to take them on. I feel, therefore, that my main commitment must be to the Soviet Underground. Be the end





of this year I plan to release a double album of the Ganelin Trio called *Ankola Da Capo*, a live performance from Leningrad. I am also working on an anthology of Soviet New Music, which will probably be a box of three records. I am still waiting for a couple of recordings from the Soviet Union, but getting them out is so difficult.'

During Leo Records' short history, the label has made a significant contribution to recorded jazz, and it promises to maintain the high standard it has set. Until recently, the records were pressed in the States and then shipped to Europe. But, from now, pressing will be done in Britain by Nimbus.

UK Distributors - TOL Distribution, 63 Salusbury Road, London NW6 (01-328 9455).

Leo Records can be contacted at 130 Twyford Road, West Harrow, Middx.

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LR 105

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Trumpeter **WYNTON MARSALIS** has been hailed as a symbol for the New Decade, and that's a lot to live up to. **Chrissie Murray** brings an insight into this forthright, young spokesman for jazz in the Eighties.

'The whole Seventies was like a period when the most talented guys just went for a bag of goods, and they didn't develop their artistic abilities.

'I love Ornette Coleman, but all these guys slip through the door as free musicians, and the critics, they don't even know what it is but they co-sign it because they're afraid they might miss something.

'The musicians won't see it that the music is placed on as high a pedestal as it should be. They've let the music be compromised...'

So speaks the uncompromising Wynton Marsalis with uncommon maturity – a weighty statement, indeed, from a 20-year-old already an accepted voice of a new jazz generation.

Art Blakey says that 'this guy makes the young kids all over the world want to cut their wrists'.

Ron Carter calls Marsalis – 'the most remarkable musician to appear on the scene in quite some time'.

It wasn't until Marsalis was 12 that he 'really got serious'.

'The summer before I went to high school, I really started practising and listening to albums, right. I studied books on the instrument.'

'I had a great teacher – John Longo. I can't even describe the amount of stuff I learned from John. He taught me more than just the trumpet. He taught me a whole conceptual way of playing. He instilled in me a certain love for playing – jazz and classical. "Listen for this in this guy's playing... listen for that. He'd always ask me to explain why, so that my mind would work. To me, the physical act of practising is just the release of mental activity that is going on before you pick up the horn. Most cats just practise.'

Ellis Marsalis can also take much of the credit.

'My father was a great influence in more ways than just musically. He believed in education. We would talk all the time. I could always go to him and say, "Let's go over this tune... what are the chord changes for this".'

'I was listening to jazz records to study, see what the guys were doing, not necessarily to get the notes off,

melodies and cantatas, lyrical études – "Play this really soft and slow...". It was a major step for me because my tongue was never really correct.'

At 16, Marsalis found himself once more in the solo spot, this time playing Bach on piccolo trumpet.

'Bach! That's the hardest. That's the crumbier! It's piccolo trumpet – extremely high! One of Bach's trumpet-players died trying to play that...'

If Marsalis found jazz musicians in awe of classical musicians, the classical musicians don't escape criticism, either...

'The reason classical musicians can never play jazz is it's impossible to give themselves a state of mind which will enable them to learn jazz. They cannot go to the cats to learn how to play jazz – they believe what they are doing is the highest way of performance.'

'Classical composers stand a better chance of becoming jazz musicians. Most of them are afraid to learn – afraid to admit that jazz is on such a higher level. They realize that jazz has exerted more influence on 20th-century music – for them to admit this, it's a reflection on their own inadequacies.'

WYNTON MARSALIS

Leonard Feather writes in the *Los Angeles Times* that 'as a jazz soloist, he is a symbol for the New Decade'.

People magazine calls Marsalis – 'one of the brightest prospects for jazz in '82'.

And, in case there's any doubt, *Down Beat's* critics vote him the 'Talent Most Deserving Wider Recognition' in 1981.

All in all, that's a hell of a lot to live up to for any 20-year-old. But, you get the feeling that Marsalis isn't just any 20-year-old.

We first saw Marsalis here, briefly, a couple of Camdens ago, doing something of a 'star turn' with Art Blakey's youngest Jazz Messengers for years.

For those who missed out on the performance, but picked up on the buzz, recorded proof emerged on Kingdom Jazz's *Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers* (recorded live at Bubba's in October 1980). With the young trumpeter now signed to that once-great jazz label, CBS, that first album – featuring early Marsalis – could be destined to become a collector's item.

Much has been claimed for this young Turk, and the future will take care of expectations one way or another. But what do we know about this guy – yesterday, just another talented teenager; today, one of jazz's hottest properties?

Marsalis was born in New Orleans on 18th October, 1961 – one of six brothers. His father – pianist-composer Ellis Marsalis – named him Wynton after Wynton Kelly.

When elder brother Branford received a clarinet, Ellis looked for an instrument for 6-year-old Wynton and came up with a trumpet via family-friend and associate, Al Hirt. But, far from becoming the child prodigy instantly, young Marsalis proved to be a reluctant *sunderkind*.

'I didn't really want to play it. By the time I was seven, the trumpet was collecting dust...'

but trying to understand what they were doing conceptually. When I listened to Bird or Clifford Brown, I was trying to see how those phrases related to what was going on around them, and to place the music in a historical perspective. That's all I did, man – thought about the music. It's a constant process of investigation, refining, absorbing, eliminating and trying to understand.'

After Longo, Marsalis became a classical student of Norman Smith, principal trumpeter in the New Orleans Philharmonic.

'Norman taught me a lot about phrasing and tonguing and, in return, my father would teach him piano. From Norman, I learned more about piccolo trumpet. It was another way of thinking about music.'

Marsalis also took some lessons from George Jensen, Longo's old teacher – an extraordinary man for whom Wynton has the greatest love and respect.

'George Jensen was one of the only white guys that would teach black guys back in the days of segregation. He was a beautiful guy – so soulful. He had a stroke, and could barely talk, and could only write with his left hand. He had a certain spirit. He wanted to live. His playing days were over but Doc Severinsen gave him a left-handed trumpet and he tried to play a little bit every now and then.

'I was taught to play legitimate, not jazz, because that's not something that can really be tutored. When I was 12 or 13, I heard Maurice Andre and I thought he was really great, so I got interested in playing classical music also. For some reason, all the jazz musicians were in awe of the classical musicians – afraid of it or something. I thought, man, I'm gonna see what this is, right. I listened to Andre and I said, damn – I wanna play like that! I played solo with the New Orleans Symphony when I was 14 – the Haydn Trumpet Concerto.

'Norman Smith showed me how to refine my style. He gave me exercises – solo

They say, "I can't really play, I can't improvise... I won't deal with that".'

Armed with a full scholarship to Juilliard, the 17-year-old Marsalis arrived in New York, eking out his allowance by playing in *Sweeney Todd* on Broadway. Then, one night, he remembers one of the worst trials of his life – sitting in the first time with the Blakey band.

'I sounded like shit, man. I played "Along Came Betty" and I didn't know it. I got lost. I didn't know where the tune was – I barely finished the form off. Bobby (Watson) was shouting out the changes in the alto key. Blakey was back there laughing and said afterwards, "Yeah, that was pretty sad but that's all right". I'd never listened to the Jazz Messengers that much. My father had some albums at home. I would never listen to that!'

'Blakey is the essence of what Afro-American music is about. What he plays is so complex. If any musical scholar tries to figure out what he's doing rhythmically, he could never explain it. His approach to playing music is so free and loose. He directs from the bandstand. What he does seems unintellectual, but it's not. He's a master of construction.'

After a few months with Blakey, George Butler sent Herbie Hancock a tape of Marsalis and, as Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter had cancelled, Hancock welcomed Marsalis. They toured all the big festivals – Chicago, New York, Cleveland, and even Japan.

'The first time I played with them in rehearsal – with Herbie, Ron Carter and Tony Williams – it was like walking on water. You're the only one that's playing, right, they just play what you play.

'For all Tony's activity, he's still playing what you're playing. You hear records and he's crowding cats, but that isn't how it feels when you're playing. He's very sensitive and perceptive. Tony's conception of playing is a lot like Art's, only he's a lot more open, more modern.

'It's ironic, man – before I played with Tony I'd never really listened to Art to hear



what he was playing. It's a lot hipper than I thought it was. You hear Art playing 3's on 4's – he was one of the first drummers to do that. Like, Art's way of playing is so scientific and advanced for what it is – and he concentrates only on making the music better.

'I really dug playing with Herbie, Ron and Tony. I was never nervous because they didn't treat me like some young kid. They treated me with respect, and they're like master musicians. It was like I was on the gig. It's on a high and advanced level. You have to know where one is because nobody's laying that down.'

With the success of his recent, first solo album, *Wynton Marsalis* (CBS), the pressure is on – perhaps, more than ever – for Marsalis to show the way as 'the new breed of musician'. He's aware of the responsibility, but not daunted by it.

'When you're young, you have a lot of enthusiasm, and I'm young now, so I don't see everything breaking down. It's easy for me to look at the other cats and say, "Oh, man – Miles did this, and Freddie did that..." People don't understand. I have to phrase this so it doesn't sound like I'm crying, but when you're black, you have a foot that's always in your ass. That's like a fact of life that you deal with. You see people come up and get this and get that, and you start feeling you should have some.'

'A great example of that is Miles. Here's the greatest trumpet-player in the world in the Sixties – Sly Stone came up, the Beatles came up, and they got what they deserved. Huge rewards! So Miles says – "Well, man – I've been

putting up with shit for all these years, and times have been harder than a muthafucker".

'The whole Seventies was like a period when the most talented guys just went for a hag of goods, and they didn't develop their artistic abilities... The musicians won't see to it that the music is placed on as high a pedestal as it should be. They've let the music be compromised.'

There are those who consider that Marsalis is still 'a bit too wet around the ears' to deliver such weighty statements and, suspecting him of precocity, have accused him of being arrogant. But Marsalis presents a spirited and convincing defence which sounds familiar...

'It's not that. When I was a senior in high school, there was one modern jazz gig in New Orleans – the Oyster Bar on Magazine Street – and we had it. It's all dixieland for tourists, and a lotta that's bullshit. Tom around catering to the whims of the kinda people who just think you're there to entertain them for laughs. Experiencing such a large degree of condescension just turned me off to a lotta stuff. I'm not arrogant. It's too much, too much to take.'

This summer, Marsalis is touring the European festivals, including the Capital Jazz Festival (25th July) – this time, fronting his own band. A big step.

'I'm very enthusiastic. I can't wait to be surrounded by a group of guys who are all interested in the same thing I'm interested in musically. I want to use the band as a vehicle for my own voice.'

Much of Marsalis' energy has gone into the band's presentation which he believes is as important as the music.

'When people come and see a concert, they are looking at the band. Serious musicians shouldn't look like they're playing a football game. I don't believe it's unnecessary protocol. The people who are paying to see the band should get more than just the music.'

'Most people won't really understand what the musician is doing musically. They can only relate to what they see and how they think the music is being presented. If you are serious about what you're doing, everything should indicate that you're serious. The bandstand is sacred – it's like the altar. You can't come up there talking while guys are soloing. I see bands with total disrespect for the music. I want my hand to be always on time.'

Like I said, Marsalis is a pretty uncompromising cat. But is he unique to his generation?

'I know about 15 or 20 guys interested in playing. That sounds like a small number but that's a lot. In the Sixties, how many were there – maybe 10 to 15 guys?

'Maybe perhaps we can salvage some of the respectability of the music...'



JOHN STEVENS

.. Spontaneous Music

TERRY COLEMAN

Drummer JOHN STEVENS has been an important and influential figure in the continual development of the improvised music scene in Britain.

With Stevens currently working on a special, three-day project involving eight musicians – to be presented at Actual 82 (ICA: 17th-22nd August) – Andrew Turner takes a timely look at the drummer's career.

In the first of this two-part interview, Stevens discusses his thinking which led to the formation of the innovative Spontaneous Music Ensemble.

'When I first started playing music in my early teens, jazz seemed to represent a very free form of creativity, even playing in what was generally regarded as bebop.

'Although I realized within that form there were certain procedures and disciplines that I needed to come to terms with, I still tended to approach the music in a free way – by that I mean that once the time was established by someone counting in, and the melody and harmony were set, I felt free to experiment within it.

'What I didn't realize was that that was not the generally accepted approach. People would ask me to play rim shots every fourth beat etc. I remember playing at Ronnie Scott's and during one of my solos, Phil Seaman shouted out "Where's the fucking melody?"

'Although I saw the established players as working at what they wanted to, and perfecting it all the time, to me it didn't have the freedom which I thought had always existed in jazz.'

Eventually, Stevens' unwillingness to conform forced him to

give up professional gigs and about 1964, together with a group of like-minded musicians, he started playing at the Sun public house in London's Drury Lane.

'I remember hearing a saxophone player there called Jan who had obviously heard Albert Ayler. I would be setting up and this guy would start wailing. So there I was, playing alongside this extremely free way of playing the saxophone, using it as an exclamation

without it dipping into, or relating to, what I was doing as an expression of freedom on its own terms. It was nice because it posed lots of problems . . . there's the freedom, now what do we do with it?

The first important step for Stevens was to find a space in which to express that freedom.

'A singer friend of mine knew a place called the Little Theatre Club run by a lady, so I checked it

out. The lady was very nice and agreed to let us use it after the theatre finished at 10.30pm.

'At the end of 1965, I started to play six evenings a week, along with people with whom I had been connected – Chris McGregor, Harry Miller, John Surman, and Trevor Watts and Paul Rutherford with whom I had been playing in the RAF.

'I was trying to look at the freedom which Jan represented, and



John Kirby



John Kirby

relate it to myself who, though feeling a tremendous urge for freedom, was also respectful of the tradition. Playing within formalized music like bebop was still very enjoyable and challenging. So, although I enjoyed playing with Jan, there was a formalized intention in me about composition. It's a paradox really – on the one hand, there's free group-improvisation which I believe in as an absolute but, at the same time,

recognising certain disciplines that exist. The association with Paul and Trevor was very important. We connected on many different levels. There was a great deal of musical cross-fertilization between us.'

These associations at the Little Theatre Club led directly towards the Spontaneous Music Ensemble which became the corner-stone of Stevens' development from them on.

'Having established the Little Theatre Club, the best idea was to give the space to different people each evening. So sometimes I would be an accompanist for someone like John Surman or Pete Lemer; on other occasions, I would develop my own ideas with Trevor and Paul, and sometimes Jeff Clyne. I suppose I became the dominant part. Ideas were flying about and began to tie up, so the way I really composed

would be allied to the way we played together.

'The compositions were not compositions in the normal sense – not mechanical. There was always the feeling of individualistic statements within them – "this is the way I play". From having worked very closely with bass players, I was aware of an amazing conversational possibility which could exist for all instruments.

'When you are dealing with something very spontaneously, and it's rapidly moving, you are taking chances. It's like saying a chance word – it's in the air and just comes out and surprises you, but it means something and, although the word happens almost by accident, it can bring about reams of ideas that were also unexpected, like a stream of consciousness. It was that feeling of awareness that I wanted to bring into the way we played. In many ways, I became a kind of musical director of the group.

'I selected the label Spontaneous Music Ensemble as something that would always be there to live up to – *Music* representing a wide reference point; *Ensemble* being as large or small as you liked; *Spontaneous* representing a challenge because life seems to dictate that you are not supposed to be spontaneous . . . to be *that* honest.

'I admit that the group developed on my terms. I was trying to impose disciplines which I believed would help us towards the essence of the music. This created many battles and conflicts within the group, especially if I believed the music was being pulled away from the path I had set . . .

(Our thanks to Adele Jones for transcribing this taped interview.)

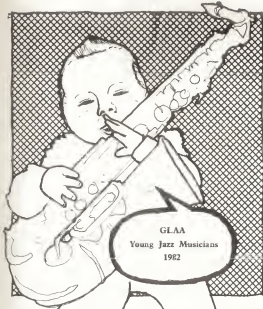
In the second part of this interview, we will explore further the musical expansions of John Stevens which were to prove such a vital force in the development of improvised music in this country and in Europe.

CAMDEN PORTRAIT

JAK KILBY



Roscoe Mitchell



There's a unique opportunity for London's jazz fans to see the cream of the capital's most outstanding young musicians at a grand 'Jazz Jamboree' in town on 26th September. All the bands taking part will be finalists in this year's GLAA Young Jazz Musicians Scheme.

Negotiations are under way to find a suitable venue for the special public concert which will showcase up to eight bands in live performance, chosen from hundreds of tapes submitted earlier this year.

For the first time this year, the scheme is receiving additional, much-needed support with sponsorship from Capital Radio, London's largest independent radio station.

This enterprising interest from Capital Radio has been much welcomed by the scheme's co-administrator, Ed Pollard, who says: 'We're very grateful to Capital for its support because the scheme is of immense value to jazz music, not only in London but in the whole of the country.'

This value is particularly pointed up when you look at just some of the previous winners which include successful musicians like Landscape's reeds-player John Walters, keyboardist Pete Jacobsen (Major Surgery/Bobby Wellins Quartet) and tenorist Tim Whitehead (Borderline/Morrissey-Mullen). Of the bands who have gone on to great acclaim, it's worth singling out the individual Stinky Winkles, Sphere and the Mike Mower Quartet.

Part of the Capital deal includes a pledged spot for the win-

ning bands on next year's Capital Jazz Festival, and the 'Jazz Jamboree' will be specially recorded for future broadcast on Capital. This effectively opens up a helpful new field of exposure for young jazz talent.

Winners also receive financial backing for promotion, guidance from two experienced GLAA administrators for a year, and free studio time to produce a high-quality demo.

The GLAA scheme aims to encourage a greater number of live performances by outstanding young artists in Greater London—a region in which it has become increasingly difficult for young 'unknown' professional musicians to perform regularly, let alone make a living wage.

The scheme further ensures that subsidy for young, up-and-coming musicians is made readily available in an area of music often sadly under-financed. A valuable spin-off of the scheme has been to enable so many young musicians to air their original compositions in front of a wider public, and to become 'published'.

The search for this year's finalists started in the spring when demo tapes were invited from groups of up to eight musicians with an average age of less than 28. To qualify for consideration, the musicians had to be professional artists for three years, and had to have lived in the GLC area for at least 12 months.

The finalists and venue for the 'Jazz Jamboree' will be announced soon in the press, backed up with posters, leaflets and information spots on Capital Radio. **Chrissie Murray**

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It takes a talented architect to realize the potential of a fire-gutted printers in an area devoted to commerce. And it takes the flair of a charming hostess who has managed jazz venues like The Grapes in Islington and worked at Ronnie Scott's, to fill a space like this to the brim with prandial delight. Will and Caroline Thompson really make this café work. Situated on the corner of Clerkenwell Green and Farringdon Lane, Farringdon tube station is within walking distance, and both Covent Garden and the new Barbican Centre are fairly close.

Yellow umbrellas on the pavement first attracted me to Café St Pierre as I trekked around the City on commercial errands. Inside, so much is done with mirrors inset with exotic lights, by Christopher Wray. This place is no half-hearted British snack bar or pretentious wine bar. The Brasserie opens its doors Mon-Fri 7.30am to 11.00pm, Sat 10.30am to 11.00pm. There are no miserable minimum charges or 'Lunch only served between 12.00 and 2.00' stipulations to annoy. Poets, ladies and gentlemen of leisure, painters, promoters, all come to relax and be watered by endless good coffee for just 40p, poured by attentive staff, and eat more or less anything they choose at anytime. Particularly to be recommended are the succulent salads and seafood.

Upstairs, the restaurant serves lunch Mon-Fri 12 to 3pm and also Sunday lunch. It caters for dinner Wed-Sat 7 to 11pm. There is an à la carte menu which is changed twice-weekly, filled with a few imaginative French dishes, at very reasonable prices.

Wine is selected by Nick Betfrage MW. Great care is taken to buy so that prices are kept reasonably low. The main list is updated regularly and again the price range seems to be just under £4 to £6.

Candles are lit and night falls in the City, and the Café St Pierre becomes a delightful lighthouse welcoming captains of commerce back into the ancient heart of London to take their pleasure.

Linden Thorp

SOUND CHECK

Record Reviews

CHARLIE PARKER: One Night in Washington (Elektra Musician MUS K 52 359)

Recorded: Club Kavakos, Washington DC - 22nd February, 1953.

Side One: 'Fine and Dandy'/'These Foolish Things'/'Light Green'/'Thou Swell'. *Side Two:* 'Willis'/'Don't Blame Me'/'Medley - 'Something To Remember You By' and 'Blue Room'/'Roundhouse'/'Interview - Red Rodney on Parker.

Charlie Parker (as)/Ed Leddy, Marky Markowitz, Charlie Walp, Bob Carey (tpts)/Earl Swope, Rob Swope, Don Spiker (tbn)/Jim Riley (as)/Jim Parker, Angelo Tompkins, Ben Lary (ts)/Jack Nimetz (bari)/Jack Holiday (p)/Mert Oliver (b)/Joe Timer (d).

'My three years with his quintet were like going to graduate school', says trumpeter Red Rodney in an interview which makes up the last track on this remarkable new album. 'I stood next to this colossal giant every night and listened to the outpourings of true, raw, genius.'

Unfortunately, recorded examples of such outpourings tend to be rare. Most Charlie Parker albums are scrappy compilations of alternate takes from jittery recording sessions, or pirated air-shots recorded with the ultimate in lo-fi equipment.

This album is different, and what a treat it is. For one thing, there are no hesitant sidemen: it's all Parker. Except for a few introductory bars of piano here and there, he is the only soloist, free to take off and soar at length over a big band specially put together in Washington to hack guest artists on Sunday nights.

Issued as part of Bruce Lundvall's new eclectic Elektra Musician label, the tapes of this particular session were in the private collection of arranger Bill Potts, and have never been released before. The sound quality is excellent; Parker can even be heard chuckling off-mike at the end of one number, and his playing throughout is magnificent.

Using an English-made Grafon alto, the same white plastic sax he would play at the historic Massey Hall concert in Toronto

three months later, Bird has no trouble cutting through the 15-piece ensemble and throws out a cornucopia of ideas in his solos.

He copes with the challenge of fronting a big band in his usual nonchalant way, scoring rehearsal and relying on his phenomenal ear to guide him safely through the modulations and key-changes in the arrangements. Once or twice a chart will catch him out, but he recovers in an instant with just the right phrase to solve the problem.

If, like me, you were amazed and inspired by this great musician years ago but had forgotten how ageless his concept was, or if you are new to the music and want to check out what all the fuss was about, there can be no better introduction to Birdlore than this album. Jack Massarik

SCHLIPPENBACH/PARKER/LOVENS: Datto Fra Di Noi (PoTorch Records PRT/JWD 10+11)

Recorded: Live in Pisa, Italy - 1981.

Side One: 'Ciclone'. *Sides Two & Three:* 'Fra Di Noi'. *Side Four:* 'Abbondanza'.

Alexander von Schlippenbach (p)/Evan Parker (ts/ss)/Paul Lovens (d/perc).

Partnerships in improvised music are seldom noted for their longevity. Established groupings tend to fragment as the musicians move on to fresh musical relationships to sustain their development. This trio, however, has proved surprisingly enduring and is well documented on record with FMP releases stretching back over 10 years. In spite of this *Datto Fra Di Noi* has a fresh vigour which many recordings and performances by younger groupings lack.

But, then, it is a particularly potent combination of musicians. Schlippenbach combines somersaulting, tumbling piano configurations with rugged chords and clusters. He imbues his playing with a sense of switchback and surprise beld only just in check by an awkward dexterity.

Lovens is a perfect partner for Schlippenbach. The precision of his percussion chatter boids the music at boiling point while he agitates and provokes, with his lacerating irregular kick accents or swathes of cymbal noise.

Evan Parker obviously enjoys the challenge of such a setting. It stimulates his coarse-grained saxophone play and yet gives him plenty of room to manoeuvre. From his irascible, urgent weaving to the plaintive granite lyricism which manifests itself in quieter moments, Parker's work

dovetails naturally with that of his associates.

The group music combines and compresses these individual qualities in a welter of interactivity. The musicians skirt each other, thrust and parry, or fall into accord, littering the overall musical shapes with a dense camouflage of detail.

The empathy of the musicians involved is thus self-evident; yet surprises and trip-wires are scattered throughout the act shunting expectations (of both the listeners and, one suspects, the musicians) this way and that. *Datto Fra Di Noi* is not only powerful documentation of an unedited set from Pisa in 1981 but also much more: a charged, emotional, mature and disciplined piece of music. As such I cannot help but recommend it to you.

Kenneth Ansell

DUDU PUKWANA'S ZILA: Sounds Zila (Jika Records 211)

Recorded: Live at the 100 Club, London - 16th January, 1981.

Side One: 'Zila'/'Uyini'/'Chandeliers & Mirrors'. *Side Two:* 'Suite Sweet Nowami'/'Thula Sana'/'B My Dear'/'Dudu Layi Layi'.

Dudu Pukwana (as/ss)/Harry Beckett (tp/fh)/Dave Defries (tp/fh)/Errol Clarke (p)/Mark Wood (g)/Eric Richardson (b)/Churchill Jobole (d)/Smiley de Jones (congas)/Peggy Phango (vocals)/George Lee (ts/f)/Pinize Saul (v)/Sonia Matabane (v)/Linda Conco (v)/Tiny Conco (v)/Peter Segone (tp)/Phil Kember (tbn)/Ernest Morthle (b).

It has been the musicians who came out of South Africa in the Sixties, more than any others, who have shown how real is jazz's long-claimed bond with Africa. More than that, they have shown how vitally linked those roots are to the longer acknowledged main trunk, branches and changing leaves of the jazz tree. The township sounds of such as Dudu

Pukwana's Spear arise in the music of the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Abdullah Ibrahim's African Group is all-American except for him. And the myriad strains of jazz are blended more and more into the music of those exiles from Africa.

What's more important is that the synthesis is totally natural. It did not take leaving South Africa for its musicians to find American jazz influences - they have long been pronounced there, especially Duke Ellington's. Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) told me last year - 'My first contact with jazz was through records - brought by black American sailors - and big hands playing urban township music. We thought of the music as part of our local tradition and Duke and Armstrong were part of us. We didn't think of it as "American music" ...'

The Cape, with its multicultural black community is thus, not surprisingly, an especially fertile ground for growing new jazz, something the musicians it has produced demonstrate so well elsewhere in the world.

With the formation of Zila, Dudu Pukwana began to demonstrate how funky guitar sounds, lyrical jazz ballads and high-sound swing could blend with the special sound he has done so much to introduce to audiences in Europe and the US - township music.

Listening to Johnny Dyani and Dudu Pukwana with most of the regular and occasional members of Zila at the same club a year after this recording, I was struck by all the jazz strains and the international forces alive in the music. I remember noting 'this is the African link direct, the American influence pure and the blend all rolled together'.

This record, made out of a live performance at London's 100 Club in January 1981, shows Dudu and other South African exiles along with an international cast of musicians putting this

Chris Wellards

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Bill Watrous

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LONDON"

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Mole 7

Art Blakey
and
Wynton Marsalis

"LIVE IN
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March 1981
Amigo 839

blend together, as well as focusing on its basic elements.

'Suite Sweet Nowami' – composed with an Arts Council Jazz Bursary – brings all the elements together. 'Chandeliers & Mirrors' demonstrates the lyrical, classic jazz qualities of the band, just as it locates its Barbados-born composer Harry Beckett at the heart of Zila's music. 'Uyini' and 'Dudu Layi Layi' are foot-moving township pieces in full swing.

This record, with its big-group format (nine regulars and eight 'special guests') is a testament to the variety of influences – always underpinned with a strong African feel – of Pukwana's music and the rich talents of his international collaborators. He's not adopting foreign sounds when playing and writing outside the sphere of such township bands as Spear or African Explosion, any more than Beckett and others are when swinging right along on the township tracks. But if we forget that Pukwana's homegrown sounds aren't all foot-stomping, there's more.

A particularly haunting track showing the lyrical components of a band may be expected to swing more than soothe – this is 'Thula Sana', a traditional Xhosa song dominated as much by the voices of Peggy Phango and Pinise Saul as by the lilting solos and duos from the flute of George Lee and Pukwana's saxophone.

Zila is a band that swings its audience on to their feet and sings them into soothing repose with equal grace, that crosses the continents and oceans in both styles and players. *Zila Sounds* shows it in all its glory. Skip Laszlo



STEVE LACY

DISCOGRAPHY

- Soprano Sax – Prestige 7125
- The Straight Horn – Candid S9007-M-007
- School Days – QED 997
- Epistrophe – BYG 529.126
- Moon – BYG 529.352/Affinity 23
- Wordless – Futura 22
- Estilhacos (Chips): Live in Lisbon – Guilda da Musica 11403001
- The Gap – America 6125
- Flakes – RCA Vista TPL 1-1097
- Lumps – ICP 016
- Stahs – FMP SAJ 05
- Stalks – Denon YQ 7507
- At Mandara – Alm 5
- Torments – Morgue 01
- The Wire – Denon YX 7553
- Distant Voices – Nippon Columbia YX 7085
- Axiame Vol 1 – Red VPA 120
- Axiame Vol 2 – Red VPA 121
- Trickles – Black Saint 008
- Straws – Cramps 6206
- Sidelines – IAI 37.38.47 (with Michael Smith)
- Clangs – Ictus 001 (with Andrea Centazzo)
- Live – Ictus 005
- Follies – FMP SAJ 18
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- Threads – Horo H205
- Catch – Horo H208 (with Kent Carter)
- Raps – Adelphi 5004
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- Stamps – Hat Hut K/L
- High Law and Order – Claxon 79.3 (duo with Maarten Van Regteren)
- Alter Ego – World Artist 1004 (duo with Walter Szuber Armstrong)
- Troubles – Black Saint 9035
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- For Example – FMP NR1 (3LP box set)
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SOUND CHECK

Record Reviews

GIORGIO GASLINI: *Gaslini Plays Monk* (Soul Note SN 1020)
Tracks: 'Monk's Mood'/'Round About Midnight'/'Ask Me Now'/'Blue Monk'/'Let's Cool One'/'Pannonica'/'Ruby My Dear'/'Epistrophe'.

Gaslini recorded these solos nine months before Thelonious Monk died. A good thing, probably; otherwise piety might have intruded and a more respectful approach seemed desirable. As it is, these are splendidly audacious performances by a pianist whose roots stretch back far enough to allow him to be confident about disrupting themes that might all too easily seem sacrosanct. Not everything succeeds (the search for novelty rather interrupts Gaslini's development of 'Let's Call This'), but even the failures have the right kind of boldness. Bill Evans might have bent the pieces from inside.

Gaslini - a musician whose range is uncommonly wide - fragments, sifts, digresses, drawing upon the original material but often in a very oblique or selective fashion. Well-known themes ('Ruby My Dear', 'Blue Monk', 'Ask Me Now') frequently get evaded until quite late in the track being made to seem outcomes rather than starting points. There are a few genuflections to tradition (the snatches of Strayhorn and Ellington which usher in 'Pannonica', for instance), also some oddities which seem to work: the modest coughing that gets incorporated in 'Blue Monk' (Gaslini shows himself to be no mean blues player on this track), and the toy carillon which acts as a continuo during part of the very brief, nicely brusque version of 'Round About Midnight'.

This LP - in fact, designed as a tribute to the living musician - has, through the saddest of circumstances, been transformed into the only kind of elegy that seems appropriate for Monk: bracing, quirky, even a trifle iconoclastic.

Charles Fox

EMILY REMLER: *Firefly* (Concord CJ-162)
 Recorded: Coast Recorders, San Francisco - April 1981.

Side One: 'Strollin'/'Look To The Sky'/'Perk's Blues'/'Firefly'.
Side Two: 'Movin' Along'/'A Taste of Honey'/'Inception'/'In A Sentimental Mood'.

Emily Remler (g) / Hank Jones (p) / Bob Maize (b) / Jake Hanna (d).

This is a hard one but, sexism never having been one of my failings, here goes.

It had to happen - a lady bebop guitarist! From New Joisey via New Orleans and New York comes Miss Emily Remler, a 335-plucking Jewish girl with a lotta technique and class. According to Herb Ellis, she's the up-and-comer to carry on the jazz-guitar tradition, and being responsible for introducing her to Concord, I suppose he might be entitled to a little over-enthusiasm. However, at 24, Emily displays a remarkable command of jazz-guitar styles, and her favourites are well in evidence: Wes, Martino et al. What she has not got, as yet, is a style of her own, and the 'star-plus backing group' set-up does not help towards a fresh sound.

From Horace Silver's 'Strollin'', through the mandatory Jobim 'Look To The Sky' (never did get on with Jobim), we find Emily the writer of tunes. Her own 'Perk Up' is a blues, a bit close to 'Spirit Feet', and on the title track, 'Firefly', this self-confessed Wesophile proves her sincerity. A Wes number, 'Movin' Along', leads us to 'A Taste of Honey'; here, Emily betrays her folk origins with some deft finger-picking (I would have liked more of this).

Tyner's 'Inception' (Emily's 'new direction') brings us to (who else?), Ellington. 'In A Sentimental Mood' is a fitting title to end a debut album of considerable promise for a rosy future, as long as Emily realizes that, although awareness of the past is vital in music, subservience to it can be counter-productive.

Jimmy Roche

DAVID MURRAY: *Ming* (Black Saint BSR 0045)
 Recorded: New York - 25 & 28/7/80.

Side One: 'The Fast Life'/'The Hill'. *Side Two:* 'Ming'/'Jasvan'/'Dewey's Circle'.

Olu Dara (t)/George Lewis (tb)/David Murray (ts/bcl)/Henry Threadgill (as)/Butch Morris (c)/Anthony Davis (p)/Wilbur Morris (b)/Steve McCall (d).

This excellent record confirms the robust health of the jazz world in the Eighties, and should be compulsory listening to all who still mistakenly imagine that fusion is the contemporary mainstream. Murray continues the tradition that came from Basie and beyond, and he favours compositions that are designed to showcase the jazz soloist. The young tenorman wrote all of them here, and he has the individual sidemen who can do justice to them, while using the vernacular of today.

He also has in bassist Wilbur Morris and drummer Steve McCall a superb rhythm team. It is capable of playing the shifting, off-centre figures, designed not to comfort but to deny complacency on the part of the horns. Not that there are any 'coasters' on parade, Lewis pays deferential respect to the lovely 'Ming', Murray stomps off on 'The Fast Life', while the waltz-time 'Jasvan' has outstanding contributions by Murray, Threadgill, Dara and Davis.

Somehow, the masterful arrangement of 'Dewey's Circle' tops them all. It is not an easy number to play, yet it elicits superb response from the octet, not only in the way they negotiate its tricky opening unison, but also in the sympathetic feeling they show for the whole contrapuntal concept. Dara and Threadgill cross swords in a duet, and the ensemble shows no surprise that its safety guards are off. The trumpet thrust and alto parries ensure that the duel remains dangerous, even if the only blood drawn is musical.

In fact, nothing about this album is bloodless. Its players demonstrate an emotional involvement that matches their technical assurance and stylistic awareness, and the line-up seems ideal for Murray's overall idea. It is music that may question traditional procedures, but it has taken good care to renew its historical passport. No visa is required for the listener to get inside this jazz territory and even the sceptic should find the scenery inspiring.

Barry McRae

RALPH TOWNER: *JOHN ABERCROMBIE: Five Years Later* (ECM 1207)

Recorded: Talent Studio, Oslo - March 1981.

Side One: 'Late Night Passenger'/'Isle'/'Half Past Two'/'Microthene'. *Side Two:* 'Caminata'/'The Juggler's Etude'/'Bumabia'/'Child's Play'.

Ralph Towner (12-string & classical guitar)/John Abercrombie (acoustic & electric guitars, electric 12-string, mandolin guitar).

You either love or hate Manfred Eicher's knob-twiddling (I happen to love it), and the latest from guitar giants Towner and Abercrombie has Eicher-producer distamped throughout. Just the two guitarists, plus plenteous guitar strings, come up with a magnificent, if somewhat introspective, album.

It's essentially a vehicle for improvisation by these two very individual guitarists - with fascinating combinations of phase-pedals and general FX. The *tour de force* is the Towner-Abercrombie collaboration 'Late Night Passenger', where they spiritedly swap rhythms and weave around a basic melody framework. The deliberately flabby bass-string sound does grow on you.

Abercrombie's 'Isle' is a fey, reflective little ballad, and 'Half Past Two' brings Towner's technique to what might have been an inconsequential tune. More complex, abstract scales are explored on Towner-Abercrombie's 'Microthene', even if it does vanish, unexpectedly, in a puff of 'conceptual' smoke.

Towner's classical roots are showing on 'Caminata' with indistinct but just-detectable shades of Albeniz' 'Asturias' (or have I been listening to too much John Williams?). Towner's 'The Juggler's Etude' is a beautiful folk-dance - its willow-wisp melody hanging in the air like perfume, but their combined efforts on 'Bumabia' at one point seem to disappear up their own sound-holes (as it were) till regaining something of its initial equilibrium.

Possibly for real guitar-freaks, much of this album (notably, 'The Juggler's Etude') will be snapped up for telly nature-films about fast-disappearing butterflies (screened when the cricket is rained off). It deserves better. What price art?

Chrisaie Murray

ART PEPPER: *Roadgame*
(Galaxy GXY-5142)

Recorded: Los Angeles - 15th
August, 1981.

Side One: 'Roadgame'/'Road
Waltz'. Side Two: 'When You're
Smiling'/'Everything Happens
To Me'.

Art Pepper (as/c)/George Cables
(p)/David Williams (b)/Carl Bur-
nett (d).

Art Pepper was the greatest live
performer I have ever seen. This
new album - live at Maiden Voy-
age (on a 'full-moon night') - was
recorded exactly one month after
his last memorable performance
in Britain. You hear a man whose
approach and technique was un-
ique; no-one has ever captured
quite that same kind of sound.

The band is the same one he
brought to Britain, including the
great pianist George Cables who
Art described as 'Mr Beautiful -
he's my favourite pianist'. The
rhythm section throughout is dis-
creet but reliable, with pianist
Cables stretching out for long
solos reminiscent of a later-day
Red Garland. Art always gave his
pianists plenty of space and, here,
Cables uses it well.

On one side, we get the blues
according to Art Pepper with two
lengthy originals - 'Roadgame'
and 'Road Waltz'. Throughout,
Art displays that unique style and
fluidity with those characteristic
clusters of frenzied notes as
though his soul would burst before
he got it all down. There never
was a more exciting player live.

For side two, he swaps the
blues for two of his favourite stan-
dards. 'When You're Smiling' is a
jaunty trip with Art on clarinet,
and that's something we haven't
heard too often lately.

The last track is fittingly,
perhaps, his soulful interpreta-
tion of the ballad 'Everything
Happens To Me', played with the
kind of emotional intensity which
makes you clutch for the
Kleenex.

As the last will and testament
of a great live performer, *Road-
game* will stir the heart for a long
time, as first you'll grin and then
you'll swallow...

The world's going to be an
emptier place without him.

C.M.

ART PEPPER

(1925-1982)

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO A MEMORABLE MUSICIAN

As usual, jazz has had more than
its fair share of casualties this
year. Gone are Thelonius, Sam
Jones, Monk Montgomery, Cal
Tjader... and on Wednesday,
16th June, Art Pepper died.

If anyone had seemed inde-
structible, it was Art Pepper. In
his 56 years, he had lived through
some of the toughest times that
the jazz life could throw at an ar-
tist. It seemed unbelievable that,
finally, this fireball of a survivor
could have been struck down by
something as conclusive as a
brain haemorrhage.

Born in 1925, in Los Angeles,
he was playing in Benny Carter's
band by 17. In the late Forties, he
was one of the young rising star
soloists with Kenton's first ex-
perimental bands in 'progressive
jazz', then a creative period with
Shorty Rogers before the Fifties
found him fronting his own
bands.

In 1951, *Down Beat* marked
him up as top alto-player and,
that year, his group - featuring
pianist Hampton Hawes, bassist
Joe Mondragon and drummer/
vibist Larry Bunker - was hailed
as the most musically refreshing
new group on the (West) coast
since Dave Brubeck's...

But, through the Fifties, Art
waged a bitter war with narcotics
and his long periods in jail, in-
cluding the notorious San Quen-
tin, were to scar his soul for the
rest of his life.

For Pepper, the Sixties were a
wasteland as his life ebbed away
in prison. A man less than Art
would have gone under but a long
spell of rehabilitation and his
iron-determination brought him
back with the release of the now-
classic *Living Legend* (Contem-
porary), proving that Art Pepper
wasn't licked. No way. Out of
weakness, perhaps, had come
Pepper's greatest strength.

For the next decade, Art lived
the 'Straight Life' which, with
characteristic latter-day op-
timism, he documented in one of
his most famous compositions.

In 1979, he published one of
the most harrowing autobiog-
raphies of all time. Called *Straight
Life**, it catalogued it all - his
childhood, through his early
music, to his unhappy experi-
ences in the Army, the women in
his life, his addiction and impris-
onments, illness, until his re-
habilitation and victory. Co-writ-
ten by his wife Laurie - 'my
fourth and greatest love' - the
photographs alone starkly record
the struggle.

His last visit to Britain was last
year where his, without doubt,
was the most memorable perfor-
mance at the Capital Jazz Festi-
val. He was looking very good
and talking with his usual nine-
teen-to-the-dozen exuberance.
On stage, his was an indiscrib-
able magic.

During one of his earlier, bad
periods, he described a jam with
Sonny Stitt. Art was so strung
out, he didn't even know if he
could play. Then... 'I forgot ev-
erything, and everything came
out. I played way over my head. I
played completely different than
he did. I searched and found my
own way, and what I said reached
the people. I played myself...
and they loved it... And that was
it. That's what it's all about.'

And anyone who ever saw the
great Art Pepper take up his alto
and blow will never forget it.

Mourn the passing of Art Pepp-
er - he is irreplaceable.

Our thoughts are with Laurie .
C.M.

A selective, personal discog-
raphy

Art Pepper Plus Eleven (Contem-
porary M3568).

Art Pepper Today including 'Pat-
ricia' (Galaxy GXY 5119).

*Art Pepper: Friday Night at the
Village Vanguard (Vol. II)* includ-
ing tenor solo on 'Caravan' (Con-
temporary 7643).

True Blues with the Milcho
Leviy Quartet (Mole Jazz 5).

**Straight Life - the Story of Art
Pepper* (1979) by Art and Laurie
Pepper is published by Scharmer
Books (New York) and Collier
Macmillan Publishers (London). It
contains an exhaustive discography
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Jr, listing all known commercial re-
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